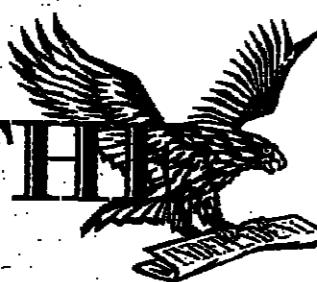


THE INDEPENDENT



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INSIDE TODAY'S SECTION TWO

MONDAY 22 APRIL 1996 40p

Monday



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Cover story

Girls sweep past boys in exams race

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Girls are doing as well or better than boys in every GCSE subject and are catching up fast at A-level, according to the first major study to examine exam trends for the two sexes over the past decade.

The 193-page report from the Equal Opportunities Commission found that boys failed to improve their GCSE performance as much as girls over the period and their performance lagged well behind in English, humanities, arts, modern languages and technology.

Even in the traditional male strongholds of maths and physics, girls' performance is now matching boys at both GCSE and A-level.

The report from Cambridge and South Bank universities offers the most comprehensive evidence so far of the extent to which boys are falling behind girls. Recently, Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools, highlighted the underachievement of white working-class boys.

The researchers argue that cultural changes have led to higher expectations of girls while the disappearance of many traditional working-class jobs has demotivated some boys. At A-level, boys still do better in English, modern languages, history, technology and chemistry but are doing as well or better in science, maths and physics.

Young men under 21 also achieve more vocational qualifications and young women opt mainly for traditional female courses such as hairdressing and beauty and care.



The year-long study of exam results between 1985 and 1994 examined the effect of recent education reforms on equal opportunities. It found that the improvement in girls' performance predated the start of the national curriculum and the 1988 Education Reform Act.

However, the national curriculum has helped to ensure that, at 16, girls are now taking "male" subjects, such as science, which they shunned in the past. Boys predominate only in chemistry and economics; girls only in social studies.

However, the report emphasises that girls still have some way to go. At A-level they still avoid traditionally male-dominated subjects such as physics: boys now account for an even higher proportion of entries in physics and technology than they did 10 years ago.

Girls do slightly better than boys at physics probably because they are such a small, selective group. The proportion of girls taking chemistry and maths also lags well behind that for boys.

Yet more boys are now taking "female" subjects such as English and modern languages at A-level.

Young men under 21 also achieve more vocational qualifications and young women opt mainly for traditional female courses such as hairdressing and beauty and care.

the gap is narrowing. Girls do better in biology, social studies and art and design. Boys also get more vocational qualifications than girls.

Madeleine Annot, one of the authors, said it was misleading to talk about boys' under-achievement. "We have a success story here. This is an excellent sign of the work schools have done to improve girls' performance so that they are now catching up."

The researchers looked at girls' and boys' performance in relation to their proportion of entry to exams. The comparisons are based on figures for those getting five or more A-C grades at GCSE and of A and B grades at A-level.

Dentists' stampede out of NHS to be halted

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The Government is planning moves to halt the stampede of dentists out of the National Health Service.

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, is preparing legislation which would bring far-reaching changes to the work of Britain's 17,000 dentists.

The Bill, which could be in the next Queen's Speech, would give local health authorities powers to "buy" health care from dentists for NHS patients for the first time.

The main aim is to allow health authorities to tackle evidence of worsening dental health, particularly for children in some areas, by setting local targets.

It would end the system of "demand-led" care under which dentists respond to patient demand and are then paid a fee for their services. The new system is likely to be coupled with tighter controls on the cost of items which can be provided on the NHS, ruling out more expensive courses of treatment or some types of dentures. There could also be clearly defined

catchment areas in which patients would have to live.

Mr Dorrell plans a series of pilot schemes in seven or eight towns.

However, the move could mean that some patients whose dentists withdrew from providing care on the NHS could have their care restored. Local authorities would purchase the care directly from the dentists. Ministers believe this will help them to defend their record on the health service more effectively at the general election.

The collapse of NHS dental care in many areas came after the Government cut fees for dentists by 7 per cent in 1990. The cut provoked an exodus as dentists moved to the private sector because they felt it was not worth working for the NHS.

In some areas, particularly the Home Counties, many practices ceased offering NHS care. In Berkshire, for example, dentist earnings from the NHS have dropped by 30 per cent since 1990.

That has led to accusations of two-tier dental service, in which some poorer families may have to go without regular check-ups.

Dentists who remained on

the NHS lists are concentrated in poorer areas. In Gateshead, South Tyneside, the fees paid to dentists on the NHS have gone up 130 per cent since 1990.

Areas such as the North-east, where dentists have stayed with the NHS, may see their budgets held down under the change from demand-led care to purchasing by health authorities.

One dentists' leader said: "They cannot pay for the whole of the health care. At some stage, some government is going to have the courage to say we cannot do everything."

"One of the things suggested by the Commons select committee on health was that there should be a basic level of service but you have to pay for bits on top of that."

Ministers are still drawing up the Government's list of legislation for the Queen's Speech. They are looking for a package to show the Government has not run out of ideas in the approach to a general election.

A spokesman for the Association of British Dentists said: "We are waiting to hear what the Government says, but we have a problem over how you relate it to the demand-led process."

IN BRIEF

Israeli gunners 'knew target was UN post'

New evidence indicates that Israeli artillerymen must have known what they were shooting at within seconds of launching their assault on the UN refugee camp at Qana, southern Lebanon. UN troops have also established that three men seen

running into the UN compound just before the attack were Hezbollah fighters.

Page 9

Delhi bomb kills Britons

Two Britons were among at least 12 people killed in a bomb blast which wrecked a backpackers' hostel in New Delhi.

Page 15

Redwood tax agenda

A 20,000-word policy agenda including a call for cuts in taxes

is to be issued by John Redwood.

The former Tory leadership candidate is also preparing for talks with Sir James Gold-

smith over his threat to field Referendum Party candidates against Conservatives.

Page 2

Mears rebuked

Eileen Penbridge, defeated by Martin Mears in the race to become Law Society president, has attacked him for labelling female lawyers "the enemy".

Page 15

Today's weather

Dry and sunny in England and Wales, with thundery showers spreading from the south-east. Rain in Scotland will slowly clear.

Page 2, page 29



Storming home: Liz McColgan runs up the Mall to victory in the London Marathon yesterday. Photograph: David Ashdown

Paedophiles 'control children's homes'

ROGER DOBSON and REBECCA FOWLER

Care experts, led by John Jilling, former director of social work in Derbyshire, say in the report: "The history of allegations of serious abuse of children by staff was frankly appalling in its extent and persistence down the years."

In a damning conclusion the report warns the Government about needing recommendations on changing practices to

Inside

'Our dereliction of duty to children in care'

Allan Levy QC, page 15

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avoids inspection and registration of children's homes; the creation of a central index of people with convictions against children and improved training.

Allan Levy, QC, the authority on child abuse who co-wrote the inquiry into pin-down abuses in Staffordshire in 1991, said: "It is still a question of a child in care may well be a child in danger... One of the pin-down inquiry recommendations was that a statutory list of offenders should be set up. Five years have gone by and nothing has happened."

Despite recommendations from a series of inquiries, it is still possible for an applicant with no experience to find work in a residential home with children. The lack of a central register of trained workers also makes it impossible for employers to check references.

Daphne Statham, director of the National Institute for Social Work, which is campaigning for a central regulatory body to oversee workers, has a collection of advertisements that read: "Wanted: Person to work in children's home. No experience required."

Ms Statham said: "Each time there's a scandal it comes up again, but then people forget about it. These children aren't listened to, while there are still people in these jobs being shifted around the system to avoid trouble. Staff are also moving between agencies, getting found out, nothing being done about it, and moving on to the next job."

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Delhi blast: Heir to Marquess of Bath injured and friends die as Kashmir and Sikh separatists claim 17 lives

Terrorists kill two Britons in hotel bombing

JAMES CUSICK

Viscount Weymouth, son and heir to the Marquess of Bath, was injured and his girlfriend and business partner both killed in a terrorist bomb attack on a New Delhi tourist hotel which left 17 dead.

The bomb, which exploded on Saturday night, was planted by Sikh and Kashmiri separatists. The young Viscount, 21, heir to the £150m Longleat estate was in hospital yesterday with minor head injuries.

The Viscount's girlfriend, Scarlet Kirby, and Crinan Wilde, a business associate, both thought to be in their mid-20s, were killed in the explosion which ripped through the low-budget Arjuna guest house near the city's main railway station. The hostel was popular with international backpacking travellers in the region.



Survivor: Viscount Weymouth, who was hurt, with his parents, Lord and Lady Bath. Photograph: South West News Service

The trio had spent most of the winter months in India helping with the creation of a new ski resort in Manali in the Himalayas. Last night Lord Bath, regarded as one of Britain's most colourful aristocrats due to his hippy appearance and lifestyle, and the controversy he created by painting sexually explicit frescoes at Longleat, said he was "devastated" by the deaths. He said he was hoping to get his son back to home to England as soon as possible.

"I feel the right solution is to bring him home," he said. Lord Bath said he telephoned the Viscount, called Caewlin Thynn, yesterday morning. "Caewlin is understandably shocked. He was in the building that was blown up. He is all right at the moment, not seriously injured, but he has a tragedy on his hands."

When the Marquess initially spoke to his son, the authorities in India had not yet broken the news to him that his girlfriend and business friend had been killed. "They were all great friends and extremely fond of each other," said the Marquess.

The two dead Britons died as the building collapsed following the explosion which came from a 25kg device. Travellers from France, Nigeria and Holland also died in the explosion. The bomb is part of the campaign by the separatists to disrupt forthcoming elections in Kashmir.

Witnesses who saw the explosion said the four-storey hotel had simply collapsed. Communiqués sent to local newspapers in Kashmir said two previously unknown groups had claimed responsibility. One message said: "This is a first gift to India for conducting polls in Kashmir." The separatists' conflict with India is now in its sixth year and has involved the kidnapping of foreigners, including Britons and Americans. Police have so far arrested six Kashmiri militants in the New Delhi area in connection with the explosion.

Last night the Viscount's sister, Lenka, was trying to arrange a flight to be with her brother. "My brother is OK physically, but not emotionally," she said. Before he left for India, Viscount Weymouth had been studying economics and philosophy at University College, London. As a teenager he attended one of the country's top public schools, Bedales in Wiltshire. He was expelled from the school when he was 17 for smoking cannabis.

More concerned with his son's immediate health and plans to get him home, the Marquess said last night that he had no idea if his son would be returning to his academic studies or whether the ski and business venture would continue.



Blast scene: Rescuers clearing debris at the hotel to get to the dead and injured

Photograph: Saurabh Das/AP

Emma Thompson adds Bafta to Oscar trophies

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

Sense and Sensibility was voted best film of the year at the 1995 Bafta Awards ceremony at the Theatre Royal in London's West End, last night. But unlike the Oscars, Emma Thompson failed to take the prize for best adapted screenplay.

She could console herself, however, with the awards for best leading actress in the film, while John Hodge took the coveted best adaptation prize for the controversial Scottish film *Trainspotting*.

Sense and Sensibility, the adaptation of Jane Austen's early novel, won a third award which went to Kate Winslet for best supporting actress as the marianne.

The Alexander Korda award for the outstanding British film of the year went to *The Madness of King George*, while Nigel Hawthorne was voted best leading actor for his performance as the unhappy king.

Michael Radford took the David Lean award for the best achievement in direction for *Il Postino*.

The award, he said, went against "the accepted wisdom in the world of cinema that you have to make the film in the English language for it to be successful". It also won the award for the best non-English language film.

Braveheart followed up its Oscar success with the Lloyds Bank People's Vote for favourite film, while *The Usual Suspects* took best original screenplay and Tim Roth was voted best supporting actor for his role in *Rob Roy*.

Persuasion, Mick Dear's adaptation of another Jane Austen novel, won the award for best single television drama, while *Cracker* took best drama series and *The Politician's Wife* was voted best drama serial.

Jennifer Ehle won best actress in the television awards for her role as Lizzie in *Pride and Prejudice* – the third Jane Austen hit of last year – and Robbie Coltrane best actor for third year running for his performance in *Cracker*.

Protestant clergy reveal dialogue with Sinn Fein

DAVID McKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

Leading Protestant clergymen have for the past six years been involved in confidential political and religious discussions with senior republicans, including the president of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams.

Many of those involved in the exercise believe the talks, which began in 1990 and are still continuing, played a significant part in convincing republicans to steer towards the IRA ceasefire of August 1994.

During the period involved Sinn Fein policy has been adjusted to take considerably more account of the rights of Protestants and Unionists. Last month a number of speakers at Sinn Fein's annual conference alluded to such contacts and stressed their importance.

The long-running contact has been conducted in conditions of some secrecy, generally taking place in a monastery in the Falls Road district of west Belfast. Among the prime movers were Fr Alex Reid and Fr Gerry Reynolds, two Redemptorist priests based at the monastery, and the Rev Ken Newell, a south Belfast Presbyterian minister.

Today the contacts, which survived the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire in February, involve up to 10 Protestant clerics and lay people. They remain a sensitive issue as many Protestants disapprove of any links with republicans.

Some members of the group, including the two priests, have also for some years been in contact with leading figures in extreme loyalist paramilitary groups. The contacts are de-

scribed by the Rev Newell in a book to be published this week, *The Fight for Peace*, and in a Channel 4 "Dispatches" programme to be broadcast on Wednesday.

In an unprecedented tribute to Mr Adams from a Protestant clergymen, Mr Newell said:

"There is a side of him that is very reflective and warm, and he deeply believes people should be together and not apart."

The Sinn Fein president attended the talks on a regular basis for several years, before suggesting the circle should be widened to involve other members of Sinn Fein. They now involve figures from the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian and Methodist churches.

Mr Newell said that in 1992, after 18 months of talks, the Protestants involved came to be convinced that Mr Adams and

the other republicans were serious about peace. He described the Sinn Fein president as originally "emotionally distant" but said he developed a growing respect for the Presbyterian and Protestant traditions.

As the talks went on, said Mr Newell, the Protestants concluded that the Sinn Fein members had a new agenda and were genuinely looking for peace.

■ Mr Adams said yesterday that Sinn Fein would shortly decide whether or not to take part in the Northern Ireland elections being held on 30 May.

He said in a radio interview: "We all have to be prepared to make the necessary flexible compromises to try and bring about a proper democratic negotiated settlement, which has the agreement of all the people of the island. That has to be the main focus."

Barts may become charity-run hospital

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

A new charity to save St Bart's Hospital and run it partly as a charitable hospital is to be launched in the next few weeks.

The Barts Foundation will then work with the City of London and the special trustees of the existing hospital to draw up a business plan which will determine whether the 800-year-old hospital has a long term future.

A report financed by the health service think tank, the King's Fund, has already proposed a future for Barts, modelled on the pre-war voluntary hospitals with the institution undertaking private work and NHS contracts while providing charitable treatment for non-paying patients.

But the new study will determine what the level of demand for paid-for services actually is. Bernard Hart, the City Corporation's Town Clerk,

chief executive, said yesterday: "It is hoped to have the results available by the summer."

"The question is what services are the city and business community and others actually prepared to pay for?" he said. Obvious candidates would be able to provide more competitively, a minor injuries unit, a wide range of out-patient services, and a nursing home in which the City of London – with an ageing population – would buy places on contract.

Mr Hart stressed that the City of London had made no offer for the site or promised any money yet to help acquire it. "We would not decide the size of the site we wanted until we knew what services it would be possible to finance and provide there."

The Barts Foundation – being

launched by doctors at the hospital and City figures who include the Lord Mayor of Lon-

Milk link to Crohn's disease

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

A research charity yesterday advised thousands of people with a chronic gut disorder not to drink pasteurised milk, following claims of a link between the disease and a "superbug" found in some shop-bought pints.

Scientists say the bacterium, which causes an incurable bowel disease in cattle, may escape destruction by pasteurisation and could be responsible for more than 50,000 cases of Crohn's disease. John Hermon-Taylor, professor of surgery at St George's hospital, London, has found the bacterium, Mycobacterium paratuberculosis, is carried by two thirds of sufferers. His team also found the microbe in 6 per cent of samples of retail pasteurised milk.

The Department of Health last night refused to back the charity's advice. A spokesman for the National Farmers' Union said that all steps are being taken to make milk safe.

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news

Underachieving: Teachers forced to deal with 'moral panic' over shortage of success among young males

Lack of job prospects 'may cause boys to fail'

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Girls' academic success over the last decade does not mean that boys are now the educationally disadvantaged sex, according to a report from the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The researchers are sceptical about the concept of boys' "underachievement" which has attracted widespread publicity. Boys' failure to match girls' performance in English in national tests and at GCSE has been a particular worry.

But the report points out that this "underachievement" tends to disappear after the age of 16, with boys still ahead in the top grades of most A-level subjects and scoring a higher percentage of firsts at university.

If some boys and young men do appear to be at a disadvantage, that may be explained not by the type of schooling they receive, but by the disappearance of the kind of jobs their fathers had and by a male working-class culture which devalues education. The report says: "It

is often left to schools to pick up the pieces and it has been clear that schools are attempting to address what might be regarded as a moral panic about the education of boys in important and constructive ways."

For example, at one boys' school where 70 per cent of pupils gained A to C grades at GCSE, only 30 per cent gained top grades in English Literature. The head decided that the exam syllabus did not reward male creativity. When he put his pupils in for a syllabus with less coursework, they scored as highly in English as they did in other subjects.

Girls' success also has cultural as well as educational roots with most girls now having higher aspirations about qualifications and jobs.

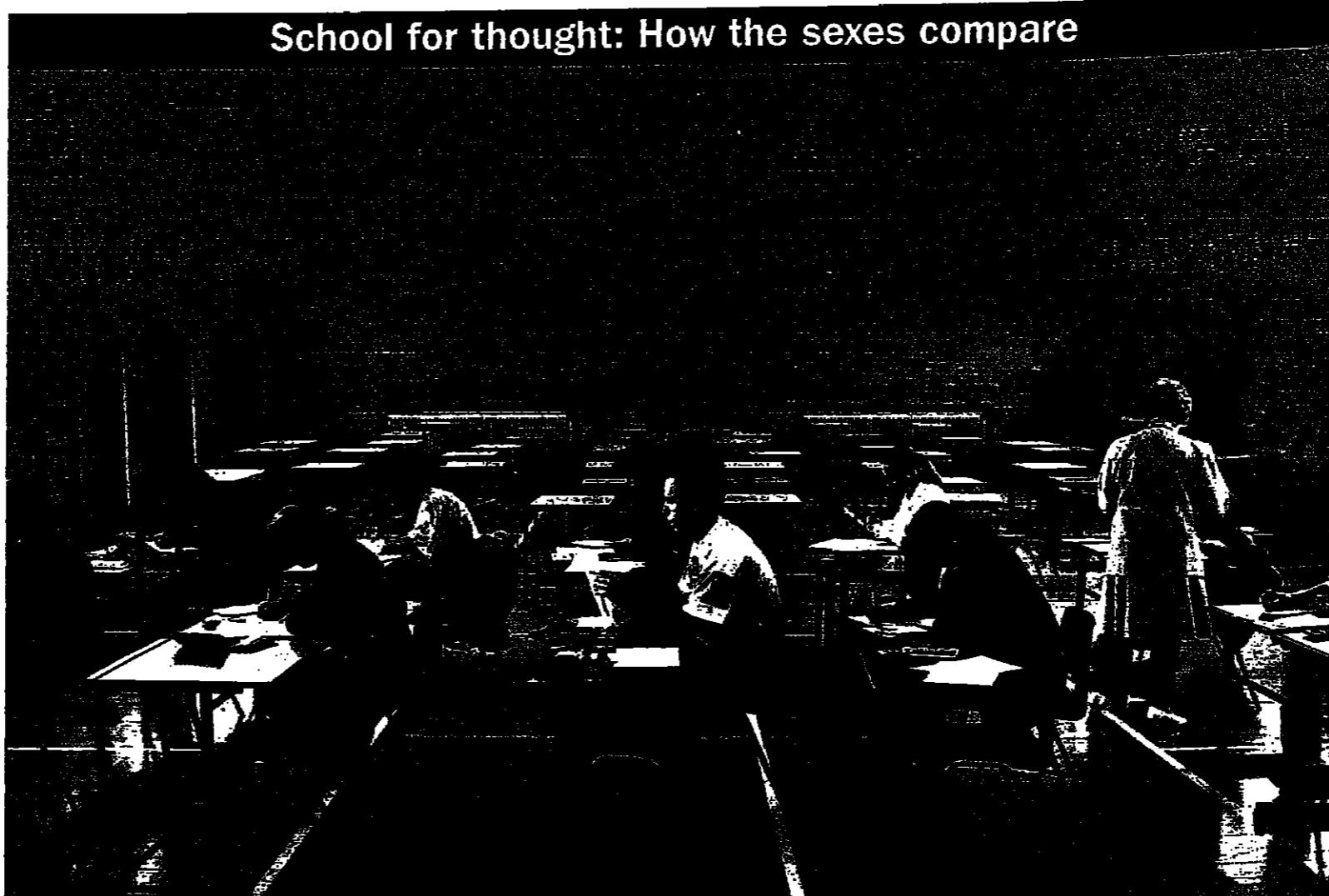
The report says: "Cultural, demographic and labour market changes have influenced the way students and teachers think about the schooling of girls and boys, such that most now consider girls' education to be equally important.

"High-scoring female stu-

dents are proving attractive to schools in the competitive climate of the 1990s and it is poor behaviour, low-achieving boys up to 16 who appear to be the subjects of greatest concern."

Yet, despite their examination success, girls still lack confidence, especially about

School for thought: How the sexes compare



moving into jobs which have traditionally been done by men, the study suggests.

And both schools and local authorities are dominated by male managers. Discrimination against women in recruitment and job interviews continues to flourish, the researchers say.

One woman who applied for a deputy head's job was told by the interviewing panel that she looked "gorgeous". The job, she said, went to a "fairly unremarkable" male colleague because he was "a disciplinarian", while she was "too pastoral". Madeleine Arnott, one of the

study's authors, said we need to discover whether the strategies used to improve girls' performance could also be used to help boys, or whether new strategies were needed.

Were employment prospects, the encouragement of pupils to aim higher, the curriculum, or its assessment the key to a general improvement in schools?

She believes we also need to find ways of supporting schools at a time when many local authorities no longer have the resources available to help them improve equal opportunities.

Wealth divide affects health of nation

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Powerful evidence that the more unequal a society is, the worse the health of its population has come from two studies in the United States.

The findings are further evidence for what the *British Medical Journal*, which published the studies, describes as a "big idea" - "that what matters in determining mortality and health in a society is less the overall wealth of that society, and more how evenly wealth is distributed."

Measures which reduce inequality are more likely to be effective in improving health than measures which increase overall wealth but also increase inequalities - the trend that has been underway in both Britain and the US over the past two decades, the journal says.

The studies from Harvard and Berkeley add "new authoritative data" to the argument that it is not just the absolute standard of living which matters but relative differences within a society - possibly as a result of "loss of social cohesion, depression, isolation, insecurity and anxiety".

Past data has shown that within the EU, for example, life expectancy has increased most in countries where the distribution of income has become more equal. The studies now show something similar among US states; those with the most unequal share of household income had the highest death rates, and the wider the income distribution the smaller their decline in mortality between 1980 and 1990. The same is found to hold true for specific causes of death which included heart disease, cancer and homicide.

"Policies which deal with the growing inequities in income distribution may have an important impact on the health of the population," the authors of the Harvard study say.

The Berkeley study says its findings give "cause for alarm, given the increasing inequality of income and wealth in the United States", while in a commentary, George Watt, Professor of General Practice at the University of Glasgow, argues that with the same thing happening in the UK self-interest may eventually make the better-off interested in greater equality.

"The advantages of living in a cohesive society may outweigh those of living in a free market," he said.

"If we share the resources of our country more fairly, we shall have a more cohesive society and reduce inequalities in health. It will not happen the other way around."

Staff vote to strike over violent pupil

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Teachers at a Nottingham comprehensive school have voted for an all-out strike in a dispute over a 13-year-old boy who they say has a long history of disruption and violence.

The boy, Richard Wilding, was permanently excluded from Glaistead school in February after he threatened both another pupil and a member of staff. However, the decision was overturned by an appeals panel and now staff at the school say they will not accept him back.

They say Richard, who has both learning difficulties and behavioural problems, was disruptive over a long period and was involved in more than 30 separate incidents between September 1995 and February this year. In January, he was excluded for five days, during which time he twice returned to the school, only to be removed by the police.

Members of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), to which 20 of the

38 staff at the school belong, say they will begin an indefinite strike on Friday if he is not permanently removed from the school.

The union says the local authority referred to his exclusion as "a reasonable course of action," bearing in mind the boy's history of disruption. However, an independent appeals panel decided that he should be returned to school.

Since then he has been kept separate from other pupils, supervised by the head teacher.

The NASUWT has been involved in an increasing number of disputes over disruptive pupils, and has called for more special units to be opened to deal with them.

It members have voted for all-out strikes on two previous occasions, one involving a disruptive primary school pupil in Birmingham and the other at the Bishop of Llandaff school in South Glamorgan, where staff refused to teach a group of boys who had sexually assaulted a girl.

Nigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary, said that in this case it had not been able to find any solution.

"This boy has been disruptive over a long period of time. We won't have him back. The demand that NASUWT members should put themselves and the other children at risk through accepting this unruly boy back in their classes is unreasonable," he said.

The boy's mother, Rita Wilding, has said she is considering legal action in order to get him back into school properly and that he is distressed by being kept apart from other pupils.

"He cries before he goes to school and he cries when he gets home. I know he has problems but this is no way to treat him," she said.

A spokesman for Nottinghamshire County Council said it was doing all it could to find a solution to the problem.

The county council's education department is now working with the head teacher to find a solution which meets the educational needs of the pupil and at the same time addresses the concerns of the teachers," he said.

Demand for ban on landmines

The Government is coming under increasing pressure to support a ban on anti-personnel mines at the start of a United Nations conference on the weapons that kill or maim more than 25,000 people a year, writes Paul Field.

The meeting in Geneva, which begins today, is part of an review of the Inhumane Weapons Convention, designed

to protect civilians from the mines. An estimated 110 million anti-personnel mines are scattered across 62 countries such as Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia, devastating communities and economic growth.

British officials will support a plan to allow the use only of mines which self-destruct over time. But opposition parties, aid agencies, and Church leaders

have joined 27 countries in calling for a total ban.

On Saturday, at rallies across Britain, they said Britain must take the moral lead. Labour's defence spokesman, David Clark, said: "The Government has dragged its feet for too long ... It should set an example by immediately supporting a ban on the trade of all anti-personnel mines."

Crisis looms as recruitment of nurses hits all-time low

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

The Health Service is heading for a "major nursing recruitment crisis" with a drastic drop in the numbers expected to qualify, according to the Royal College of Nursing.

While 37,000 nurses were registered in 1983 and 14,000 in 1995/96, official statistics reveal that next year just 9,000 nurses will qualify - the lowest number ever, the College believes.

On the eve of the RCN's annual conference in Bournemouth, Christine Hancock, the union's general secretary, accused the Government of having its "head in the sand" over the threat facing the NHS.

Ms Hancock said there was no shortage of people who wanted to be nurses, it was simply that the Government had cut the number of places.

Ministers had encouraged recruitment to be devoted to each NHS trust and as a consequence there was no co-ordination. Fewer trainees had been taken as part of the Project 2000 training programme in order to reduce "wastage."

Managers had failed to appreciate the "savagery" of the

cuts, believing quicker throughput of patients would mean a lower demand for nurses.

Ms Hancock told a pre-conference briefing that the system in fact required more staff for the intensive nursing necessary and more nurses in the community for people who had been discharged early.

Ms Hancock said the trusts were now forced to scour Finland, Holland, Germany, Sweden and Australia for staff. A trust at Colchester was paying for nurses to come to Britain.

Delegates to the conference will have an opportunity to protest over the shortages today when John Bowis, a health minister, faces a question and answer session.

Ms Hancock said: "The Government has to understand what such a drastic fall in the number of registered nurses will mean for patient care in the

NHS and the independent sector. The Government cannot have it both ways. On the one hand it refuses to collect national statistics on the nursing workforce but on the other it dismisses clear evidence from the RCN of nursing shortages as merely anecdotal."

In the absence of Government figures, the RCN is to set up its own model for predicting demand for nurses. Delegates are expected to back a resolution tomorrow calling for a national forum to research and advise ministers and managers on workforce planning for all health care professions.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said ministers did not "recognise" the figures produced by the College.

"All the evidence we have is that the match between supply and demand for nurses is better than it has ever been."

Councils owed £1bn in unpaid poll tax

PAUL FIELD

Five years after its abolition, local authorities are still owed at least £1bn from the Community Charge. But the debt could be considerably higher because only 60 per cent of councils in England and Wales responded to a survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountants (Cipa).

On top of the poll tax deficit, most of which will have to be written-off, local authorities are owed £574m in unpaid council tax, £98m in business rates and £47m in residual

rates, abolished in 1990. Top of the outstanding debts table is Lambeth council, chasing £176m in total with £75m in poll tax alone. Last year, the inner London authority only managed to claw back 6 per cent of its total amount of outstanding poll tax deficit. Westminster Council is chasing £67,000 of poll tax arrears and £4m in council tax.

The Cipa survey, based on 1994-95 actuals, gives a clear indication that the problem of arrears is an urban one, with London boroughs and metropolitan districts facing difficulties tracking down non-payers.

Mike Dubock, financial officer with the Association of London Authorities, said: "Losses on collection can potentially have a knock-on effect on council tax bills and services provision. However, with the poll tax councils would have had to make assumptions about the debts."

The problem facing councils under an obligation to chase arrears is the high cost of recovery outweighing the income. The collection costs of all four debts for the 60 per cent of authorities which responded to the survey reached £31m last year.

Mr Dubock points out that if councils are not seen to be pursuing the arrears residents may think they can avoid paying. "Clearly there is quite a lot of poll tax outstanding and the longer it goes on the more difficult it is to collect, but councils cannot be seen to be allowing people to get away with it. If they apply that to the council tax we get into a rapidly downward spiral," he said.

However Martin Pilgrim, under-secretary for finance of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, believes most councils are prudent enough to budget for outstanding debts.

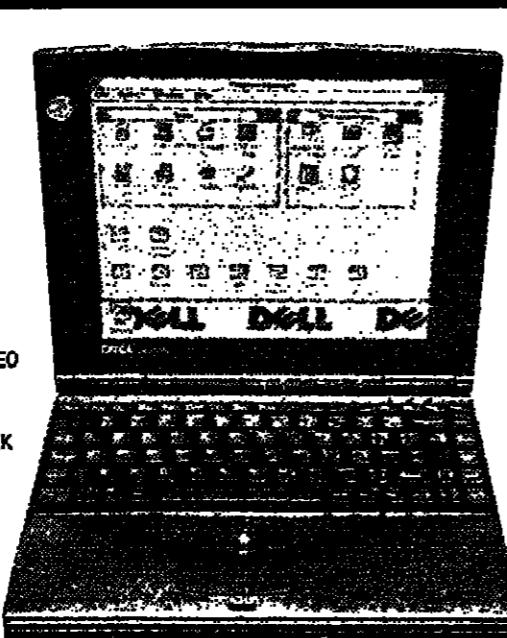
"Most councils have made provisions or written-off those amounts. It usually results in pushing the council tax up but many have over-provided for the poll tax losses and are now getting a bonus. However, it cannot be used for services, only for lowering the council tax."

The survey indicates that council tax collection has proved easier than the poll tax. At the height of the protest against the Community Charge, local authorities were faced with arrears of 21 per cent of the collectable amount. The figure has now fallen to 7.6 per cent.

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Wealth divide affects health of nation

NICHOLAS TRIMMINS

Jails leak: Howard's plans to scrap renovation work and remove television sets from cells are exposed

Cuts may force closure of unfit prison blocks

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Significant parts of Britain's jails may be forced to close because they are expected to become unfit for human habitation, a leaked briefing paper to the Home Secretary has disclosed.

It also reveals that Michael Howard is planning to remove televisions from the cells of prisoners in 20 jails – even though he acknowledges that it pacifies inmates and saves on staffing costs. He says television for prisoners does not accord with his "austere regimes".

The paper, seen by the *Independent*, is a background briefing for Mr Howard's latest meeting with prison staff detailing what he was prepared to tell officers – and what he was not.

One of the items of "background only" information was the fact that most modernisation schemes in the country's 136 jails were being dropped next year and that maintenance spending was to be reduced to the "bare minimum".

With jails already full from a record number of 54,000 inmates, the Prison Service expects to be forced to use police cells as sections of at least 14 jails, which have become unsafe through crumbling infrastructure or unsanitary conditions, are closed.

The report says the effect of the cuts in budgets which leaves the service with £100m to spend on its entire building stock and land "may well be the loss of some accommodation ...

because of infrastructure failure owing to inadequate maintenance or because of action by environmental health officers.

"Because margins on likely population and accommodation are so small any loss of accommodation will mean a significant risk of using police cells," it says. The paper also reveals the service is considering the closure of some jails, the merger of others and in the long-term the possible expansion of others.

The briefing document also shows that Mr Howard was able to tell staff that he was going to reject in-cell television – a key recommendation from the Learmont inquiry into security, carried out in the wake of last year's serious escapes. However, he was not prepared to tell staff that those inmates who already have them will be given six months notice of their withdrawal because of the threat to disorder. Nor that unconvicted prisoners on remand will still be allowed to have them.

Mr Howard's "line", as revealed in the documents, is that in-cell television "incompatible with government policy that prison regimes should be decent but austere". His meeting with staff was to discuss the impact of the 13 per cent budget cuts over the next three years. While his line to staff was that they should do their utmost to maintain education and other out-of-cell activities, he would not tell them that 60 per cent of jails were axing education classes.

The briefing paper confirms the 3,000 staff cuts being sought

by the service, but reveals that the Treasury is unlikely to fund the costs of redundancies beyond the beginning of 1997 putting even greater strains on prison resources.

Yesterday, Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Police Officers, said: "This paper makes it clear that prison cuts are compromising inmates' activities as well as internal security. Ministers must learn the lesson that a high incarceration rate is irreconcilable with spending reductions."



Greetings Ma'am: The Queen, in the only public appearance on her 70th birthday, is given flowers at the Church of St Mary Magdalene at Sandringham yesterday. Over 1,000 well-wishers sang 'Happy Birthday'. Photograph: Alan Donohoe

Till they meet again

The typical British manager spends almost 20 years in meetings during his or her career, a survey showed today. More than a quarter of that time is spent travelling to and from meetings, yet many of them could have been avoided by a telephone call, fax or letter.

The survey of 500 business managers, commissioned by BT, found they attended six meetings a week on average. A quarter of those interviewed said at least one meeting a week turned out to be pointless or unproductive.

The survey identified a widespread view of meetings as a status symbol – the more someone goes to, the more important they are. More than a third of managers complained that their company had a "meetings culture", in which everything has to be discussed at a meeting.

Some claimed that colleagues fix meetings at the end of the day to get away early, or at a client's office in the morning to get a lie-in.

DAILY POEM

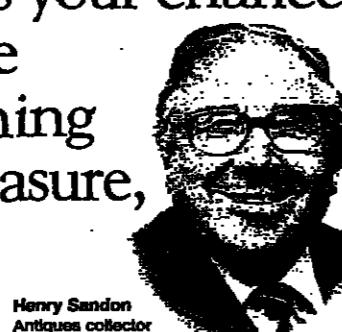
Many think Quintia's beautiful

By Catullus

Many think Quintia's beautiful. She's tall And well-proportioned and her skin is white. I grant her these good points, but I won't call Her "beautiful". She has one fatal fault – No sex-appeal: there's not a grain of salt In that big dish to stir the appetite. Lesbia is beautiful – not only blessed With better looks than other girls, but dressed In the mystery she's stolen from the rest.

Catullus's small quantity of verse fits nicely into the Phoenix series of 60p classics. *From Bed to Bed* is a rather surprising collection of the bawdy and the sensuous, at the centre of which is Catullus's passion for the elusive Lesbia of which we are given full and fulsome treatment. Things, as they say, do not go well.

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Julie Ward mystery: Fresh hope after eight-year fight for justice

Father joins new Kenyan bid to solve bush murder

REBECCA FOWLER

The father of Julie Ward, the murdered British tourist, arrived in Kenya yesterday to join the fresh investigation into her death eight years ago, following the collapse of the initial inquiry in a police cover-up.

John Ward, a hotelier from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, has spent more than £500,000 in his own quest to discover the truth behind the murder of Ms Ward, who was 28 when she died. A number of high-ranking Kenyans have been implicated in the crime, including a senior policeman, a politician and a confidante of the president.

At first the Kenyan authorities refused to mount a police investigation at all, or even hunt for Ms Ward's body. Mr Ward hired a plane to search the area immediately after her death, and has subsequently travelled to Kenya more than 60 times and taken on his own private detective.

Despite high-level support for the new inquiry, to be led by six investigators, Mr Ward denied reports that officials have indicated that the Kenyan government is preparing to pay all his expenses in an out-of-court settlement. He is currently taking legal action to recover the money.

Mr Ward said: "I've heard nothing, and no one has indicated they want a meeting to settle the issue of my expenses. There certainly wasn't an envelope waiting for me when I arrived. I'm quite confident we will get the money, but we're certainly not there yet."

Mr Ward launched his own campaign to solve Ms Ward's brutal murder at the remote Masai Mara National Park in September 1988 immediately

after her death when there was no action from the authorities. Within a week he found her severed leg and part of her jaw. The rest of her body was burned with petrol six miles from her abandoned jeep.

Two game rangers were originally charged with Ms Ward's murder, but they were acquitted in 1992 because of insufficient evidence. The new investigation is expected to focus on statements from a former Kenyan policeman, who claims he witnessed her final hours.

Valentine Kodipo, currently in hiding, said he came across Ms Ward's body while on patrol in the game reserve. He said she was taken bound, gagged and semi-naked from the back of a van and whipped by a number of men including a senior police officer before being bludgeoned to death while a leading politician looked on.

Although Mr Ward is now working alongside the authorities, and his private detective has been made a detective chief inspector for the duration of the investigation, he says that they would never have had a chance of discovering the truth if he had not taken on the case himself.

Mr Ward said: "This investigation really is taking off, and I'm sure the money I have spent will come back. But if I had not had that money to spend at the beginning, we would never have even found her body. Another 24 hours and it would have gone. Then we would never have known what happened to her."

The new investigation may also be backed up by Scotland Yard. Britain and Kenya have agreed to allow the Yard to reopen its own inquiry, but are in dispute over who will pay.



Victim: Sheep farmer Trebor Roberts among his flock at Esgair Garw, still affected by fall-out from Chernobyl

Photograph: Rob Stratton

Nuclear cloud hangs over the hills

The sinister imprint the Chernobyl disaster painted over Wales a decade ago still stains the Arenig Mountains.

This Thursday sees the 10th anniversary of the world's worst nuclear accident, which spread radioactivity across Europe.

It dumped radioactive caesium on Esgair Garw, a farm near Dolgellau where Trebor Roberts' 1,000 sheep are still quarantined by government restrictions on movement and slaughter in order to keep suspect meat out of the food chain.

His is one of 390 farms with 220,000 sheep still under the Chernobyl cosh.

Farming the rugged and rain-swept mountains has always been tough. The peak behind Mr Roberts' 1,000 acre holding touches 3,000ft. Chernobyl

made life even tougher. A magistrate and leading figure in the National Farmers' Union, Mr Roberts said: "The crisis was badly handled at the start. Officialdom was complacent, even arrogant. We were told the problem would be over in a few months."

The chronology bears out that criticism. Chernobyl exploded on Saturday, 26 April, 1986; over the weekend heavy radioactive rain soaked north Wales.

The deluge triggered monitoring alarms at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station a dozen miles across the mountains from the Roberts' farm.

It was not until 20 June that

the Government admitted there was a problem and imposed restrictions which quarantined some 2 million sheep on about 5,000 farms in Wales.

Eventually, after a number of measures were floated – some of which could only be described as outlandish – a programme of monitoring and marking was introduced.

Now, sheep leaving a restricted area are scanned by Ministry of Agriculture officials using hand-held radiation counters. Failures are marked with streaks of apricot paint to show they cannot be sold for meat. The colour is regularly changed by decree.

Radioactivity falls when

sheep are moved to cleaner pastures and buyers of marked sheep can have them monitored again until they pass.

Farmers are paid £1.30 compensation for each scan.

The real problem is in the marketing. Mr Roberts explained: "Say I need to send 30 animals to market, I have to give the Ministry seven days' notice. They come along and test and fail so I can take 20 to market, by which time the price could move against me and as I'm only able to sell two-thirds I don't get the income I need."

From the window of the 200-year-old farmhouse, he looks across the valley to a neighbouring holding. "Only a mile

of mass of gristle."

"We've not seen anything like that before," said Mr Roberts.

or two over there the restrictions have been lifted" he says wistfully.

The trouble for farmers like Mr Roberts lies in the ground. Much of the soil on his 1,000 acres is peaty, holding the radioactivity tenaciously.

A long association with the land breeds an equally tenacious doggedness: "We have learned to live with the effects of the crisis. It's very bad, but then you think of the people still suffering at Chernobyl itself."

This month several deformed lambs have been born on the farm. One had no lower jaw, another was missing bones. A third delivered by Mr Roberts' son, Emlyn, seemed like a solid mass of gristle.

"We've not seen anything like that before," said Mr Roberts.

Rapist sacked from nursing home

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

A nursing home has sacked a convicted rapist – whose regulatory body allowed him to resume his nursing career last month – after he failed formally to disclose his convictions.

Sussex Health Care, which runs the 68-bed Forest Lodge nursing home in Uckfield, East Sussex, said its experience meant it would now back the introduction of formal registration for car workers or the formal disclosure of criminal records "at the earliest opportunity". The move is being demanded by social services directors who say a General Social Services Council is needed, similar to nurses' and doctors' disciplinary and registration bodies.

Yuen How Choy, 50, has been working as a bank care assistant – a non-nursing post – at Forest Lodge for the past five months. Last month he was restored to the nursing register by the United Kingdom Central Council on Nursing which had struck him off after a 1984 conviction for rape. Mr Choy was also convicted in 1972 of drugging a patient to obtain sex.

Sussex Health Care originally stood by Mr Choy, providing a reference at the UKCC hearing and saying he had carried out his work "with care and professionalism". According to the council, it said it would employ him as a nurse.

Yesterday, however, the company said Mr Choy had made no mention of his past convictions when applying to work at Forest Lodge last September, despite a legal requirement to do so. It had learnt only on Saturday from East Sussex Health Authority of "additional information surrounding Mr Choy's previous convictions". The company added: "In the light of what is now known to us, Mr Choy will no longer be called upon to work in any capacity."

The authority, which registers and inspects Forest Lodge, said it first learnt that Mr Choy was working in another home in its area as a care assistant last autumn. It contacted the home and he left shortly afterwards.

When it saw his name on the staff list at Forest Lodge, it advised the home "to consider seriously the wisdom" of employing Mr Choy. However, he stayed on at Forest Lodge.

Yesterday, the company said its homes carried out extensive screening procedures, but police checks of criminal records were not available.

After its experience, "it is our intention to require prospective employees to themselves obtain a police record before employment". Alternatively, all carers should be registered "as a pre-requisite to seeking employment," the company said, adding "we will be supporting these ideas for implementation across the industry at the earliest opportunity."

Blood-thirsty sucker in need of warm shelter

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

The wild, blood-sucking medicinal leech is clinging on at the edge of extinction. Huge numbers are raised in captivity because it is still used in medicine, particularly to make anti-blood coagulating agents and in plastic surgery.

But in the wild the leech, a relative of the earthworm, is globally threatened and in Britain there are only a few small, widely scattered populations. The species is one of 116 animals and plants for which rescue plans have been proposed by a joint government and wildlife charities committee.

Several of these populations are in lochs in Argyll. When surveys from Scottish Natural Heritage, a government wildlife conservation arm, went to look for the leech last year at eight sites where it had been previously recorded, they only found it in two. "Every species needs a right to exist in its natural habitat," says Martin Gaywood, who looks after the leech for SNH. "The medicinal leech is rather a charismatic species – people are both repulsed and intrigued by them."

Heritage of the wild



Medicinal leech: Few left

The leech is also found on the island of Anglesey, Cumbria, and a few sites in southern England. Its stronghold is on the shingle spit of Dungeness, but the total UK population only amounts to a few thousand.

The species needs warm (and therefore shallow), nutrient-rich and fairly still waters with abundant water plants. The two-inch long adults are her-

maphrodites and lay egg-containing cocoons in the late summer. In the following spring tadpoles are an important food source for the young leeches.

The medicinal leech is much larger than all but one of the other dozen species found in Britain, and it also has the most catholic diet – it will attach itself to mammals (including us), birds, amphibians and fish. It swims towards a source of movement in the water, inserts its sucker, injects a little anti-coagulant and drinks deep, taking up to five times its own body weight in blood. Once full it drops off and lies low, spending the next few weeks or even months digesting the meal.

Collection for medicinal purposes may have been an important bygone reason for its decline in Britain and elsewhere (although this may also be how it arrived here from Europe in the first place).

The rescue plan calls for a nationwide survey to pinpoint its remaining haunts by the year 2000, with safeguards for all of these. Ponds should be dug near some of these water bodies to provide extra habitat. The maximum annual cost of this programme is put at £17,000.

Bank blast linked to blackmailer

PAUL FIELD

Scotland Yard detectives were last night still investigating whether the blast outside a Barclays branch was the work of the mystery blackmailer known as Mardi Gra who has been waging a letter-bomb campaign against the bank.

Three people were slightly injured when the small device exploded without warning at the height of the Saturday afternoon shopping rush at Ealing Broadway, west London.

The homemade bomb was in a flowerbed in an alley to the side of a Barclays branch, just

yards from three cash dispensing machines. Shoppers were evacuated from the scene within minutes and anti-terrorist branch officers spent almost four hours combing the area for forensic evidence.

It was the second time in three days that a bomb had exploded in west London, but police ruled out suggestions that it could be the work of the IRA, owing to the small size of the improvised device. Yesterday, officers were examining the possibility of a link to the terror campaign against Barclays.

Earlier this month it emerged that a blackmailer had been fer-

robbing Barclays for 16 months.

Calling himself Mardi Gra, the extortionist has posted or planted more than 25 devices. Until Saturday no one had been badly hurt because the devices were all missing part of the detonator.

The blackmailer, described by detectives as an obsessive man, appears to have taken a great pride in his work – bombs have been meticulously packaged and he has used distinctive logos and wording. He first struck in December 1994, when he sent six devices to Barclays branches in north-west London. Only one went off, burning the hands

of the woman who opened it.

The devices have been fitted into video boxes and books, and featured shotgun cartridges and bullets designed to explode when opened. Most devices were sent to addresses in London, direct to the bank, its officials, companies connected to them or placed in telephone boxes outside banks.

Last night a Barclays spokesman said that the bank had received no further information from the police as to the identity of the bomber. "It is of great concern to us. Obviously we are sending out regular advice to staff and this will continue."

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

A record 30 per cent increase in pay is expected to be recommended by the top salaries' review body before MPs pack their bags for their long summer recess. The Government is unlikely to block the move, which could raise MPs' salaries by more than £10,000 – from £4,850 to about £45,000 a year.

The recommended rises for

MPs' pay by the Senior Salaries Review Body, disclosed in the *Independent on Sunday*, threaten to boomerang on John Major. He backed moves to refer the issue of MPs' pay to the body in the hope of defusing it.

But its recommendations are likely to cause a public outcry, and leave the Government in a dilemma in the run-up to the general election. Ministers are also likely to distance themselves from the recommendations, leaving it to MPs

themselves to decide whether to accept the proposals in full.

There could be a series of votes on the issue before the summer recess at the end of July. Tory MPs are keen to increase their salaries, because they fear the tough new rules on public standards, following the Nolan report, will limit the scope for them to supplement their official salaries with private earnings outside Westminster.

Mr Major is blamed by some

Tory MPs for wrecking their pri-

vate incomes, by setting up the Nolan committee. Some left-wing Labour MPs have opposed increases in salaries for MPs, and may vote against any further rises, but the numbers could be increased if MPs should be paid two rates, with a lower rate for those who take outside work.

Sir Edward Heath, the former prime minister, said in a *GMTV* interview yesterday that MPs should get £100,000 a year, but the number of MPs should be halved to about 325.

However, some senior backbenchers believe MPs remain underpaid. Frank Field, the Labour chairman of the Commons Social Security Select Committee, said that MPs should be paid two rates, with a lower rate for those who take outside work.

It could also enhance their pensions if they lose their seats at the election. That would be seen as feather-bedding for the future, rather than getting a fair rate for the job.

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8 international

Clinton-Yeltsin summit plays to the voters

Re-election hopes featured heavily at the weekend meeting, writes Phil Reeves

Moscow — A lacklustre Boris Yeltsin had five hours of talks with his friend and fan Bill Clinton in Moscow yesterday, in which they differed over Nato, made progress on two arms-control treaties, and did their best to help one another keep their jobs.

It was their 10th meeting in three years and allowed Mr Clinton to attempt to give a hefty nudge to Mr Yeltsin's campaign bandwagon before June's presidential elections.

Mr Clinton, facing an election in November, warmly supported Russia's economic reforms, although he was careful not to go as far as Germany's Helmut Kohl, who has openly said he wants to see Mr Yeltsin stay in the Kremlin. Although the presidents hugged and complimented one another, there was none of the backslapping merriment of the summit in New York last October.

Their discussions followed the G7 summit in Moscow on nuclear safety convened at the request of Mr Yeltsin, who has long harboured ambitions to join the leading industrialised nations, so far without success.

Although the two-day affair was marred by a domestic row over the death of 50 federal soldiers in a Chechen ambush, and overshadowed by Lebanon, it was not an outright disaster for Mr Yeltsin, and may even have allowed him to register some modest gains.

Above all, he managed not to commit any behavioural gaffes and although he seemed down-beat, he appeared in reasonable shape, and did nothing to heighten worries over his health which flared up last year with his second heart attack.

He berated his guests about Nato enlargement, which will have annoyed them but have gone down well with the electorate. Yesterday Mr Clinton said his position on Nato was unchanged, but in no "way, shape or form does it mean a threat to the security or legitimate interests of Russia".

At a joint press conference, Mr Yeltsin even squeezed in some overt campaign sloganising. Asked about his prospects of beating off a Communist challenge for the Kremlin, he retorted: "I'm not going to answer that, because I'm sure victory will be mine." This is disputed by Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist leader, whom Mr Clinton met last night. The Russian - who, rivals warn, will bring back Soviet-style Communism - told him he wanted "long-term, good-neighbourly and normal relations" with the US.

Mr Yeltsin also seized the opportunity to try to convince voters he is fulfilling his promise to end the Chechen conflict before the election. In remarks that will astonish recent visitors to villages in southern Chechnya, which have been bombed and shelled, he said there had been "no military operations" in Chechnya since 31 March: "It is another thing that some gangs are still there running around." Nineteen of Chechnya's 22 regions had signed peace deals, he said. But Chechnya "must and will remain within Russia, a view Mr Clinton endorsed.

After their meeting yesterday, Mr Clinton said important progress had been made on the agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. Russia has been accused of breaching the former by having too many troops in the Caucasus; the latter involves a dispute over the definition of the missiles covered under the treaty.

But as the flags and banners came down in Moscow, Russians may well have been wondering whether they had witnessed much sound and fury, but nothing of significance.

The G7's main agreements on nuclear safety contained no surprises and no historical advances. Even the agreement to have a complete ban on nuclear testing - perhaps its most significant achievement - depends on settling differences with China and India.

Mr Yeltsin has been told to raise the issue with Peking later this week, during his trip to China - another fixture which has as much to do with his efforts to be re-elected as with global affairs.

Pointing the way: Mr Clinton with Mr Yeltsin yesterday. They differed over Nato enlargement but made progress on two arms treaties
Photograph: Reuters



Shogi bears fruit with a champion for Japan's youth

Japan, a country of powerful groups rather than charismatic individuals, has never been a great breeding ground for heroes, but the last year has seen the emergence of a surprising number.

Sumo wrestling fans have been electrified by a pair of boyish brothers named Wakanohana and Takachancho. The ace baseball pitcher Hideki Matsui, who last year transferred to the Los Angeles Dodgers, has gained a following across America. But this year the spotlight has fallen on a different, and unlikely role model: a skinny, be-spectacled 25-year-old named Yoshiharu Habu.

Habu is a grand master of

shogi, an ancient Japanese game with rules and terminology very similar to chess. Shogi is played on an 81-square board, with flat wooden counters each bearing a Chinese character, as well as familiar pieces like kings, bishops and knights, the player manipulates jewels, lancers, and gold and silver generals.

Like chess, it requires a combination of precise technique and imaginative intuition, qualities central to Japanese culture, from judo to landscape gardening. "Habu's most powerful weapon is the inspiration he gets from the right side of his brain," explained a eulogistic profile in the weighty *Yomiuri* newspaper.

In appearance he is unprepossessing to the point of nerdishness - pale, skinny and

This inspiration is being called 'Habu magic'.

There are 20 million shogi players in Japan and in February Habu climbed to the very top of the heap by winning all seven of the major championships. His frowning countenance has appeared in countless newspapers and magazines, and even on a promotional poster for the Tokyo metropolitan police. But shogi skills alone do not explain this sudden celebrity - Habu's appeal lies in the combination of his youth with a very old fashioned and traditional sensibility.

Even after clinching the grand slam he did not allow himself the traditional clenched fist victory salute, although he caused a minor scandal when he

LOCAL HEROES : 13

Yoshiharu Habu

owlish, habitually photographed hunched over the board in the traditional male kimono, wafting himself with a paper fan. Shogi players are by nature a reticent bunch but Habu has surprised even them with his undemonstrativeness.

Even after clinching the grand slam he did not allow himself the traditional clenched fist victory salute, although he caused a minor scandal when he

was seen applying lip balm before a crucial game. The significance of this action is elusive, but it raised eyebrows in the rarefied shogi world. "Such a gesture may not have appeared altogether appropriate for a top player on the verge of winning all seven titles," the *Yomiuri*'s critic cautioned.

The younger generation of Japanese - well-fed, well-off and bored - are the cause of much anxious talk among journalists and theorists, and commentators are in no doubt about the significance of Habu's rise, and that of his sporting compatriots.

"Unlike the traditional image of a genius - an aloof person with a strong sense of individuality - all of these young heroes are polite, quiet and thoughtful, and have pleasant personalities," observed one profile.

Evidence suggests, however, that Habu is more fun than he looks. Despite his sober demeanour, he won the envy of young men all over Japan last month by marrying ire Hatada, a beautiful actress popular for her roles in several television dramas. The ceremony was a traditional rite held at a local Shinto shrine, but ire's world could not be further from Yoshiharu's: a few weeks before the wedding there was great excitement when she was assaulted in Tokyo's station,

apparently by a crazed male fan. Shogi is an all-consuming game, and the emotional and intellectual demands have been the death of more than one maniac. An old folk song tells the tragic story of a man whose obsession with the game cost him everything. Much of his pathos is lost in translation, but the first line is salutary: "I have staked my life on little shogi pieces which would disappear if I blew on them."

But if anyone can combine the demands of domestic bliss and shogi mastery, it is Habu, as he made clear at the couple's post-nuptial press conference.

"We will combine our energy to build a happy household," he

led by Mr Dini for the last 15 months, or a broad cross-party coalition committed to institutional reforms, or total breakdown followed by another general election.

Opinion polls have been banned for the last three weeks, but private surveys have pointed to a slight advantage for the Ulivo, which has the confidence of the financial markets and many of Italy's foreign partners. But the exact nature of the new government will depend on the detail of the results. Trends to watch out for include:

■ The relative strength of Mr Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Mr Fini's National Alliance. The moderate wing of Mr Berlusconi's party has been steadily squeezed over the past two years as Mr Fini has grown stronger; a poor result for Mr Berlusconi could force his retirement from politics and the collapse of his party.

■ The performance of the Northern League which, according to the private surveys, could be a big beneficiary if Forza Italia falters, allowing it to hold the balance of power. Both main blocs have spurned alliances with the League because it is considered unpredictable and dangerously separatist, but they might have to change their minds.

■ The performance of Mr Dini, another pivotal figure. Although standing with the centre-left, he is a conservative by nature and a former Berlusconi acolyte. If the result is close, and if he does well, he might emerge as a compromise candidate for prime minister, attracting support not only from the Ulivo but also from disillusioned moderate members of Forza Italia.



Habu: King of shogi - a game played by 20 million

champion vowed, his lovely bride at his side. "I am cleaving to a fresh resolve but I must act responsibly - both as a shogi player and as a member of society."

Richard Lloyd Parry

EU plans cross-border database on refugees

As immigration controls are tightened, there are fears the system will be open to abuse, writes Sarah Helm

Plans are being finalised in Brussels for a Europe-wide refugee database, which will hold the fingerprints of every asylum-seeker who applies for refuge in an EU country.

The database, to be called Eurodac, is viewed by refugee agencies as another sign that Europe is erecting an ever-tighter "ring-fence" against asylum-seekers and immigrants. Civil liberties lawyers caution that a database for refugees could set a precedent for other EU-wide personal data systems, to assist in policing and internal security throughout a border-free Europe.

Britain already has a national system for fingerprinting asylum-seekers, and France has signalled its intention to set up a national scheme. The plan being drawn up in Brussels envisages an unprecedented cross-border data-sharing system.

According to a confidential draft convention on Eurodac now circulating between justice ministries, a central computer would be based in one EU capital - possibly Rome - with linking terminals in each member state. Immigration officials in each country would have access to the fingerprint database, and would use the information to see if an applicant had applied elsewhere in Europe.

The stated intention is to further harmonise refugee policy in each member state and prevent applicants who are refused entry to one EU country, from moving on to apply in another. Under an existing convention, EU countries have already agreed that asylum

seeker refused entry in one country should be refused entry by all.

Refugee bodies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, fear that the database could be open to wide-scale abuse. Security agencies in the asylum-seeker country of origin could gain access to the data, thereby placing applicants at risk should they be forced to return home.

Asylum-seekers would have few rights to check information held on computer, where details on why an application was made and refused will also be stored. The EU officials are discussing whether the information should be made available for internal police investigations or to other EU authorities.

Frido Roscam-Abbing, of the European Consultation of Refugees and Exiles, said: "Our main fear is that the information about an asylum-seeker would get back to the applicant's country of origin, leading to further persecution."

The proposals are not a European Commission initiative and have not yet been presented to the European Parliament for approval. Neither the UN High Commission for Refugees nor any other interested bodies have been consulted on the plan, which is being discussed in secret between officials of justice ministries in member states, under the inter-governmental system of co-operation, established for justice and home affairs issues under the Maastricht treaty. As such there is extremely limited scope for democratic consultation. Once

the plans have been finalised by civil servants, they will be presented for agreement to Europe's justice ministers. Britain, which opposes most new centralising initiatives proposed in Brussels, is expected to support Eurodac as a means of strengthening immigration controls.

"The human rights implications are enormous, yet decisions like this just go through on the nod," said David Burgess, leading British asylum lawyer. "Either we are creating a two-tier system of rights - one for third country nationals and another for EU nationals. Or we are going to accept that holding information on huge groups of people like this is normal."

The Eurodac scheme follows a series of measures taken jointly by EU member states aimed at co-ordinating asylum procedures, in the wake of fears of growing numbers of so-called "economic migrants" seeking to enter the EU. Common methods for processing asylum seekers have been agreed, as has a common visa list, under which member states impose visa requirements on a single list of countries. A single EU visa will also soon be issued.

The numbers seeking asylum in the EU have already been significantly reduced. As the ring-fence is erected, it is envisaged that internal border checks between EU member states will be further relaxed, allowing EU citizens to move more freely. Britain, however, still opposes reduction of internal border controls despite the new measures for exterior frontier controls.

IN BRIEF

Aid money used for child sex allegation

Sydney — An independent investigation will be conducted into accusations that Australian diplomats in Asia used aid money to buy access to orphans for child sex, the government said yesterday. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer announced the inquiry during an official visit to Thailand's capital, Bangkok, after Sydney's *Sun-Herald* newspaper reported the allegations.

'Drunken' Russians in lethal accident

Moscow — An armoured personnel carrier carrying eight drunk Russian servicemen crashed into a house, killing one civilian in the Ingush republic bordering Chechnya, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. The 10-ton vehicle was part of a Russian Interior Ministry column heading for Chechnya.

Kenyan party condemns government

Nairobi — Kenya's opposition Safina party, still awaiting official registration, yesterday appealed to Western countries to condemn the Nairobi government for what it called its hostility to political opposition. Richard Leakey, a renowned palaeontologist and secretary-general of Safina, said in a letter to the Nairobi envoys of the United States, Japan and several European countries that the government had demonstrated it did not want the next elections to be "fair, let alone free".

New leader for Nigerian Muslims

Lagos — Muhammed Maccido, the choice of the people of Sokoto in northern Nigeria, was yesterday named Sultan of Sokoto. Maccido succeeds Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki who was de-throned by the military government on Saturday and arrested.

Correction

In Saturday's *Independent*, in the article titled "Egypt undergoes a change of heart" by Adel Darwisch on page 9, the two quotes advising Hizbollah to reject the ceasefire proposal were in fact from a speech made by Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The omission of two lines from the original meant head of the Egyptian Official Church, Al-Azhar University.

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Tight result forecast as Italy votes

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

With everything still to play for after a tightly contested campaign, Italian voters flocked to the polls yesterday for their third general election in four years, hoping above all for a clear result to enable the country to end its chronic political instability.

Early indications suggested that turnout among the country's 49 million eligible voters would be high, belying widespread forecasts of voter cynicism about how much this election can really change.

The results, which will probably have to be digested carefully even after they are announced early this morning, will point to one of three outcomes:

■ A victory for the centre-left coalition known as the Ulivo, or Olive Tree, led by the Bolognese economist Romano Prodi and supported by the mainstream left as well as progressive Christian Democrats, environmentalists and the outgoing prime minister, Lamberto Dini. This would mark a historic turning point for the Italian left, which has been excluded from national government since the war.

■ A victory for the centre-right, led by Silvio Berlusconi and his reformed neo-fascist ally Gianfranco Fini. This would restore the government led by Mr Berlusconi after the last election in March 1994, but without the support of the separatist Northern League, which has since gone its own way. Its programme this time is less moderate, less committed to the free market and more Euro-sceptic.

■ No clear result. This could lead to another "technical" government similar to the one

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international

UN evidence heaps more blame on Israelis

Three days after the Israeli slaughter of at least 110 Lebanese refugees at the United Nations peace-keeping post in Qana, the Fijian soldiers whose headquarters were blasted apart by the Israeli guns have placed a small spray of coloured plastic flowers in the crater of a shell that killed 40 people. But less happy sentiments are being expressed among the UN troops as evidence is slowly amassed about what actually happened in the minutes last Thursday when the UN compound was turned into a replica of the Sarajevo market massacre.

The evidence includes UN witnesses who saw a pilot-less Israeli reconnaissance drone taking photographs over the compound as the slaughter went on. If this was of the type

that transmits live television pictures - which the Israelis are known to possess - then the Israeli artillerymen must have known what they were shooting at within seconds. UN troops have also established that the three bearded Hezbollah men who fired the two Katyushas and four mortars whom the Israelis claim they were firing at 300 metres from the compound, were later identified by Fijian troops running into the UN compound for protection just before the bombardment. They may be among the dead.

UN technical personnel have also concluded that all 12 shells to hit the base were 155mm shells with M-732 proximity fuses which exploded each round seven metres above the ground, thus causing maximum

casualties and what in military parlance is called "amputation wounds": in other words, they cut off arms, legs and heads. They were fired from new American M109A1 howitzers which need a forward artillery "spotter" - in this case presumably the drone - and which are almost impossible to fire inaccurately.

One UN official recalled an almost identical incident a month ago when 32 Israeli shells were fired at the site of a Katyusha launching 300 metres from a UN compound in another area.

"They didn't put a single round into the UN base. I know what they're saying now, but these Israeli soldiers are rewarded for being tough and aggressive and I simply cannot believe that this was an acci-

dent," one officer said. Of all UN personnel I spoke to privately yesterday, only one said that he could not bring himself to think that the attack was deliberate.

Records also show that despite Israel's claim that it did not know that refugees were

shelling under the UN's protection, a senior member of the UN's civil staff in southern Lebanon told an Israeli general at 1.15pm on Tuesday - 49 hours before the massacre - that 5,000 refugees were being protected and that the civilians were sheltering in every UN

position, including Qana. The remarks were made after Israeli artillery rounds repeatedly landed close to UN supply convoys taking blankets and food to civilians at the UN posts. It has also emerged that in the two minutes after the Katyushas were fired from a cemetery to the north of the Fijian compound, another 260 civilians, inhabitants of Qana who had hitherto stayed in their homes, ran in panic through the gates of the post - along with the total number of refugees to around 880. Fearing retaliation on the area - though not, of course, on their compound - Fijian soldiers began to pack as many refugees as they could into their bunkers, physically pushing women and children into the concrete interiors

until no more could be accommodated.

"We wanted women in first but mothers here have three or four children and they wouldn't go into the bunkers with three children and leave the fourth lost outside," a Fijian officer said yesterday. "They were hunting for children who had run off and were playing with friends. They were crying because they couldn't find them. Then the first Israeli shells came in." Another soldier described what happened next.

"There were shrieks of agony and pain as the shell fragments cut off the legs and arms and heads of the refugees. They sounded like animals who had gone mad. We desperately tried to get UN operations to tell the Israelis to stop. But the Israelis didn't respond; they just sent us



Robert Fisk
hears that shells
fired on Qana
were designed to
cause maximum
casualties and
could hardly be
fired inaccurately



After the storm: Fijian UN soldiers in Qana clearing away the debris left by last week's Israeli shelling of their headquarters in the village in south Lebanon that killed more than 100 refugees

Photograph: Hassan Hamdi/Reuters

Truth brings reality to PR show at Qana

ROBERT FISK
Qana, southern Lebanon

Hervé de Charette's face was as white as death. The French Foreign Minister, neatly clad in blue suit and tie, had gingerly walked through the scene of last week's massacre at the UN's compound, nodding diplomatically as the UN's Fijian commander described the 12 minutes in which Israeli shells slaughtered up to 120 refugees, the sliced-up corpses that his soldiers were forced to pick up, the difficulty in identifying parts of the children who had been torn to pieces. Mr de Charette

wrong. "We have lived through hell," Mrs Zirir continued. "The people were chopped into pieces by the Israeli bombs. They bleed, these people. You should have seen the heads."

At the French foreign minister's right, a Lebanese softly translated the woman's dreadful words. The PR men began to look uneasy. "We have lived here 40 years and now we are treated like animals," the woman cried. "Do you know what the dogs did at night after the killings? They were hungry and I saw them in the ruins eating fingers and pieces of our people."

Mr de Charette stared at her as if he had seen a ghost. This had clearly not been part of the programme, a schedule that was supposed to have whisked the foreign minister from a light lunch at UN headquarters in Naqoura to a photo-opportunity on the roof of the wrecked UN battalion HQ, a three-minute press conference to give the impression of openness and a swift drive back to the coast and a helicopter to Beirut - everything, in fact, that would enhance France's much-trumpeted love for Lebanon. Reality had very definitely not been part of the programme.

A UN soldier was quite blunt about it. "This place is going to be turned into one of those awful pilgrimage sites for the great and the good," he muttered. "Boutros-Ghali sent his emissaries today to express their horror. But they'll do no more than they did after Srebrenica. They'll tut-tut and shrug it off.

Then things began to go

This is all for show. And they won't even have the guts to condemn Israel - even now - for this wickedness."

And indeed, the UN Secretary-General did send General Frank Van Kappel of the Netherlands army - not, perhaps, a happy choice after the Dutch army's disgrace at Srebrenica - and he duly marched round the site of the worst carnage, asking how many rounds landed, where the Katyusha missiles were fired from and whether he could be shown this site to discover if any Israeli shells had fallen there.

He would be meeting with General Amnon Lipkin Shahak, the Israeli chief of staff, he said. "Frankly," the Foreign Minister replied sharply, "I have not had an opportunity to make categories of unhappiness. What we have to work to do is to make it impossible for this to happen in the future in Lebanon. And so say all of us. Did he believe Israel had given sufficient explanation of the massacre? "I hear there is an inquiry. We have to await the results."

Mr de Charette was even more gentle of spirit. What had happened on Thursday was "unfortunate", an event for which France wished to show its sympathy for the Lebanese. So how did it rank in the scale of civilian atrocities? How did it rank, for example, beside the Sarajevo market massacre?

And you can see their point. On the coast road back to Beirut last night there were burning cars, civilians deliberately targeted by Israeli warships north of Sidon, three of whom had been badly wounded. Had this been a Syrian warship shelling Israeli civilians on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road, of course, Mr Clinton himself would have deplored - rightly - an act of "international terrorism".

The problem, however, is that neither America nor Europe are going to condemn the country which pounded the refugees of Qana with 155mm shells for 12 minutes, and such condemnation is about the only palliative that the Lebanese might accept for the moment.

Peres turns to US diplomacy

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

In search of a ceasefire in Lebanon, Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State, yesterday shuttled between Damascus and Jerusalem to talk with President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister of Israel.

President Assad wants to see the reinstatement of the 1993 understanding under which Israel and Hezbollah pledged not to fire at civilians. Mr Peres who launched Operation Grapes of Wrath 12 days ago, wants the Israeli army to be able to shoot into villages in the Israeli occupied zone in south Lebanon from which Hezbollah guerrillas are operating.

Mr Peres faces an election in six weeks. If he is seen by Israeli voters to have caved in under international pressure, this could cost him the election. At the same time, Israeli-Arab voters, who yesterday called a day of mourning because of the attack on Lebanon, may stay at home on 29 May.

Mr Christopher arrived in Jerusalem yesterday morning for two hours of talks with Mr Peres. The US and Israel are eager to fend off intervention by Russia and France, whose foreign ministers are also in the area. Mr Peres said: "If there is more than one channel there will be total confusion." He added that a ceasefire was possible "in a number of days".

President Assad assured Mr Christopher that he would urge Hezbollah to seek a ceasefire. The US wants Syria to rein in Hezbollah in return for Israel limiting the freedom of action of its army. The ceasefire would be supervised by a body headed by the US. After the

slaughter of 105 Lebanese refugees at Qana, Israel is very dependent on American diplomatic strength and goodwill.

Meanwhile, there are growing signs of disagreement in the Israeli armed forces. A senior officer in the Northern Command of the Israeli army was quoted by the daily *Ha'aretz* as saying: "As far as we are concerned, [the operation] was a failure... yesterday the terrorists fired more than 100 Katyushas into northern Israel."

The officer said that Israeli military intelligence miscalculated the strength of Hezbollah. He said: "Obviously, they will try to shift the blame... but the biggest fiasco of this operation is military intelligence's."

Immediately after the Qana incident the General Staff reportedly curtailed Israeli army activity - though this is contradicted by Lebanese observers - and Major General Amnon Levine, the head of Northern Command, is said to be "low and very angry". Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, is expected in Israel tonight. Although Israel says the US is the only channel for mediation, the intervention of Mr Primakov and Hervé de Charette, the French Foreign Minister, will put pressure on Mr Christopher, who, until the Qana massacre, supported the Israeli operation.

Israeli commentators note wryly that President Assad, who appeared isolated a month ago when President Clinton organised the Sharm el-Sheikh conference on terror and Middle East peace, is now in a very strong position. At the weekend he had Mr Christopher, Mr Primakov and three European foreign ministers paying him court.

This week in



INDEPENDENT

This week and every week, Section Two has a new look, with more pages, new features, a daily radio column and an expanded listings section providing Britain's most comprehensive daily guide to come out.

on Monday

A new regular section, Family Life, that deals with the interests and problems of parents and children. Julie Myerson's column also focuses on home life. Plus: a new series - Do we need? - which challenges the icons of modern Britain. And, every Monday, unrivalled coverage of the expanding world of information technology in our Network pull-out section.

on Tuesday

Health: how wearing a virtual reality helmet could help cure phobias and other psychological problems. Plus: itchy nails are not simply a problem for the vain

and in Sport: A 24-page tabloid section with all the action from the weekend's sporting action. Plus: the Monday interview, in which a leading figure comes under the microscope, an unbeatable results service, gossip, speculation and fact from behind the scenes and the best in sports photography.

on Wednesday

Edgar Jones's diary continues to chronicle the encounters and exquisite embarrassments in the life of Britain's most read spinner. Plus: the midweek travel section, your money, finance

and law. In our back pages, Martin Newell, Britain's leading rock poet, and Neil Kerber, one of the country's funniest cartoonists, present their views of the modern world.

on Thursday

All our regular features, including Virginia Ironside's Dilemmas, John Walsh's column, plus film, education

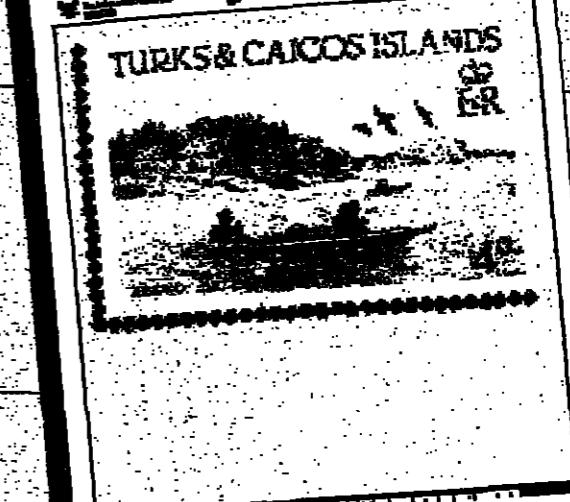
and graduate plus. In the back pages, William Hartston's history of the world in 10½ inches

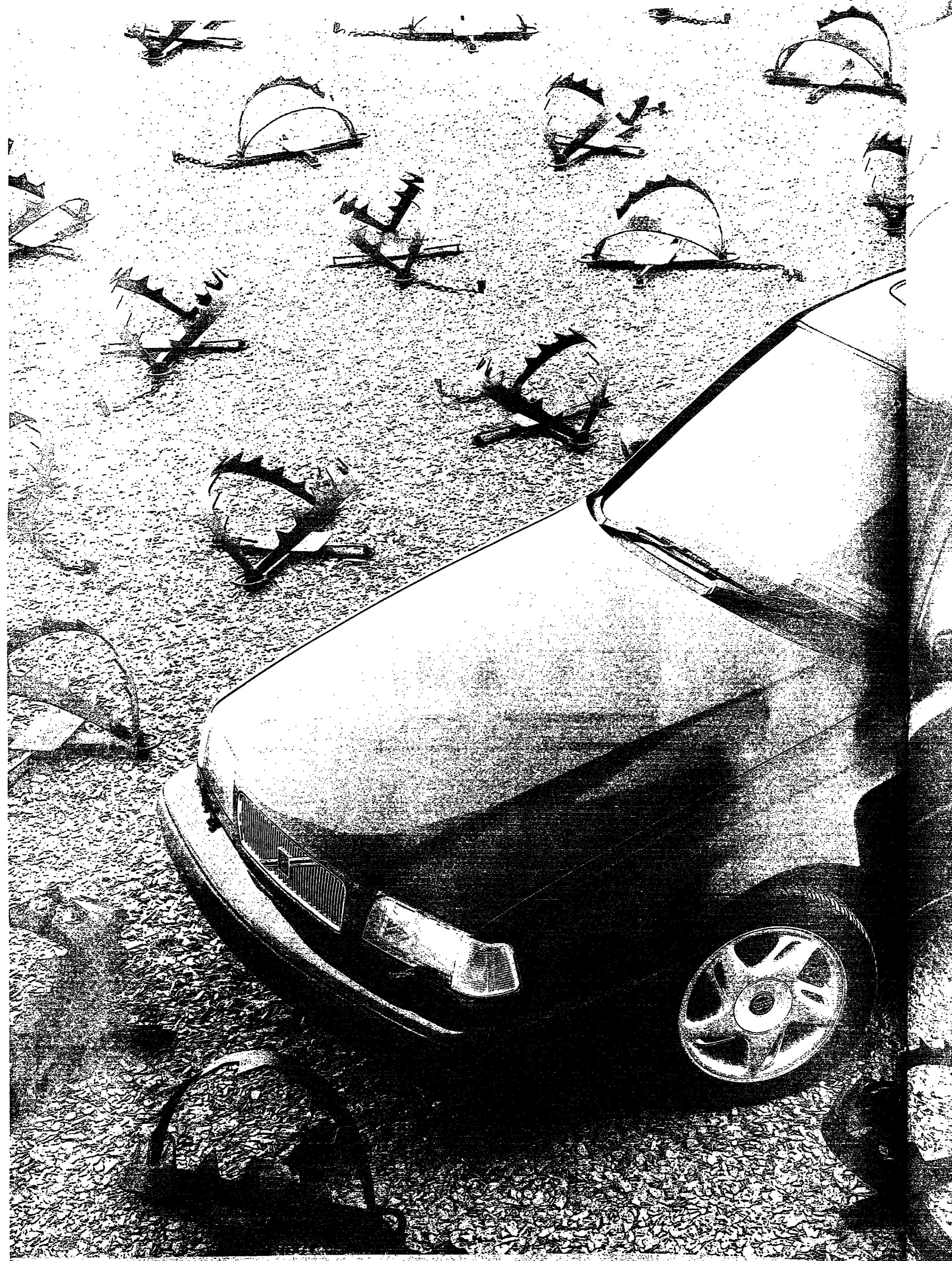
on Friday

24Seven - a new 20-page pull-out-and-keep entertainment and listings section, including a complete day-by-day planner for the week ahead, plus

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Monday





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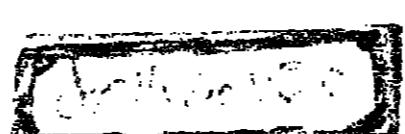
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Tony Blair's Victorian values

Try to sum up what new Labour stand for, in a sentence. You can't. Tony

Blair's politics, at once conservative and radical, pragmatic in purpose yet moral in tone, defy easy summation.

Conservatives allege that this is a ploy to throw us off the scent; old Labour will soon emerge from beneath the smart disguise. The traditional left believes it already knows what Blair stands for: abject surrender to a conservative consensus.

Yet if new Labour were already fixed in stone, like a monument, it would be a political disaster in the making. New Labour's politics is confusing because it is still developing and learning, borrowing and stealing. It does not obey the laws of the old politics of left and right; it is happy to take from both. That elusiveness is a sign of its strength, but also a weakness, for it worries people who want to know where new Labour stands on vital issues such tax and Europe.

This week, the *Independent* will subject new Labour to a thorough political audit. Our aim is not to work out what the party will do in detail in each area of policy. We want to uncover the values and the tensions that lie at the heart of Tony Blair's political ambitions. Andrew Marr's placement of new Labour within British political traditions today will be followed

tomorrow by Polly Toynbee questioning the party's new social conservatism.

On Wednesday, Hamish McRae will examine its conversion to capitalism, and on Thursday Yvette Cooper will ask whether Labour still believes in making society more equal. On Friday, we will deliver the *Independent*'s judgement of new Labour.

By Andrew Marr

The effect of new Labour on old Britain is most odd, like a gold-digging starlet latching on to a decrepit, suspicious old gentleman. The country is flattered by the young thing's attention, impressed despite itself. But under the flush of pleasure, there remains a leathery cynicism about what is coming next. We suspect it will end in tears and maybe betrayal. We think it will cost us. Yet the flirtation is fun and glamorous and a change from our weary marriage to the Tories – so what the hell!

Just using the word "glamorous" about Labour, without it seeming ridiculous, is a measure of how far Tony Blair has brought the party. To a degree which is both impressive and dangerous, new Labour is Tony Blair. He is not only the party leader but its spirit, its momentum, its public identity. His internal reshaping of Labour has smashed through the organisational barriers between the leader and the led. Looking ridiculously young, he glams with confidence so brightly that everyone around him fades.

And if speeches brought enlightenment, Tony Blair would also be the best-understood politician of modern times. Explanation gushes from his office in an unstoppable flow. There are the speeches: Blair in New York, Blair in Tokyo, Blair in Singapore, Blair in the Savoy Hotel, and in Glasgow, and in Derby. There are the interviews: Blair on Frost, Blair on ITN, Blair in the Sun, Blair in the Telegraph ... More remarkable still, almost every outing makes headlines. We get Blair on the middle classes; Blair on religion; Blair on morality; Blair on globalisation; Blair on Thatcher.

And yet, despite all this prose, the essence of Blair's new Labour remains hard to grasp. What, finally, is the party for? What would it really do? Everywhere we turn, it stands before us, hand outstretched, a brightly smiling enigma. We see him here, we read him there – but he's still that damn elusive Mr Blair.

The reason for his elusiveness is that new Labour is sending out different signals. Sometimes it seems that Blair is simply a conservative; that the Tories may be doing disastrously in the polls, but that Tory ideas are now utterly triumphant. Blair, after all, is a public school product, with traditionalist views on morality, education and the family. His political language adds to the impression. He uses old Tory slogans such as One Nation. Recently he said: "I am a politician who works by instinct. I believe in enlightened self-interest..."

On policy, too, he speaks in a way that would quite recently have been regarded as Conservative. Let's rehearse some of the most

important. Macro-economics? Speaking recently in New York, Blair was wholly orthodox, arguing that errors such as borrowing too much or allowing inflation to recur "will be punished rapidly and without mercy". Indeed, in some ways the Tories are now marginally less orthodox on monetary policy than Labour, being hostile to giving the Bank of England entrenched independence and much more hostile to British membership of a single European currency, with all the rigid discipline that would involve.

What about the great issue of globalisation, a prime source of

globalisation, a prime source of the economic and social insecurity

which Blair complains of? No, he is "passionately pro-free trade and anti-protectionist". In America, as in France and many other countries, there is now a strong protectionist backlash, composed of trade unionists, environmentalists, supporters of local development, and some isolationists and nationalists. Blair is one of the

oddbodies of British politics that it is not represented here at all. New Labour is a leading part of the dominant free trade consensus.

On Europe, British relations with the US, nuclear weaponry and diplomacy generally, Blair sounds far more like a traditional centrist Tory of the Douglas Hurd type than like Eighties. Crime and family values? There, of course, his instincts are celebrated traditionally. Tax, too: unlike earlier Labour leaders and some current frontbenchers, such as Clare Short, he doesn't make the case for taxation as a force for civilisation; he apologises for it, and promises restraint. One could go on: it isn't surprising that some people, from the Tory right to the Labour left, have simply concluded that if Blair so often speaks like a conservative, looks like a conservative and argues like a conservative, then that is what he is.

Others, though, hear a different tune. Here is a man who has committed himself to the most dramatic programme of political reform undertaken by any mainstream party leader. He calls himself a radical. His party's promises on lifting the tax burden on lower-income workers imply, though they don't yet say so, higher taxes for wealthier employees. He is committed to a minimum wage and to social protection of a kind that the Conservatives are hostile to. He promises investment, notably in lower class sizes and an expansion both of nursery and of higher education; this must be funded somehow.

His Shadow Cabinet contains many more traditionalist Labour figures, and on the Labour back-benches there remain examples of – drop your voice – actual, real-life socialists. Abroad, though con-

servative in some ways, Blair's new Labour is much closer to the mainstream of European integrationist politics than real Conservatives. So others see Blair not as a conservative, but as the frontman for a subversive new leftism, the leader of a party that in power would put up taxes, re-regulate and go further in dismantling the old British constitution than any radical party has before.

It isn't surprising that voters are confused. Part of the problem, though, is that we are still asking the wrong questions. We are still influenced by the great struggle between socialism and capitalism which endured through most of this century. It made politics – at least in

theory – a fight between competing ideologies in battle to the death – a feature of at least the first part of the 20th century – has ended. It is a common *non sequitur* to believe that this diminishes political choice and renders all political alternatives the same. It doesn't. There will still be significant differences between political parties in values and priorities ... But the pot of specific policy prescriptions will be more often held in common. They may be used for different purposes and drawn by different motives, but the right and left hand will sometimes be dipping into the same pot.

But today we are in a new world in which the difference between parties may be much less, but will still matter. Political choices didn't disappear with the old Soviet Union. Blair has put it this way:

came from a failure to understand that the 20th-century clash of ideologies may have been the historical exception, not the rule: "Nine-tenths of the time, curiously, would understand our developing political world more clearly."

About that, at any rate, he is surely right. A comparison with 19th-century politics is a useful perspective on new Labour. From Chartism to Gladstone's last administration, Victorian reformers had seen the old British constitution as one of their prime targets for change – just like new Labour. On economics, they also tended to sound fairly orthodox pre-Keynesians and post-Keynesians sing the same song. Like Blair, the Victorian radicalism of Bright or even Gladstone was high-minded affair, moralistic and evangelical about education and self-improvement. If, as at some times seems, new Labour has reduced almost all economic policy to education policy, this is a outcome that would have been readily understood by the Liberals of high Victorian Britain.

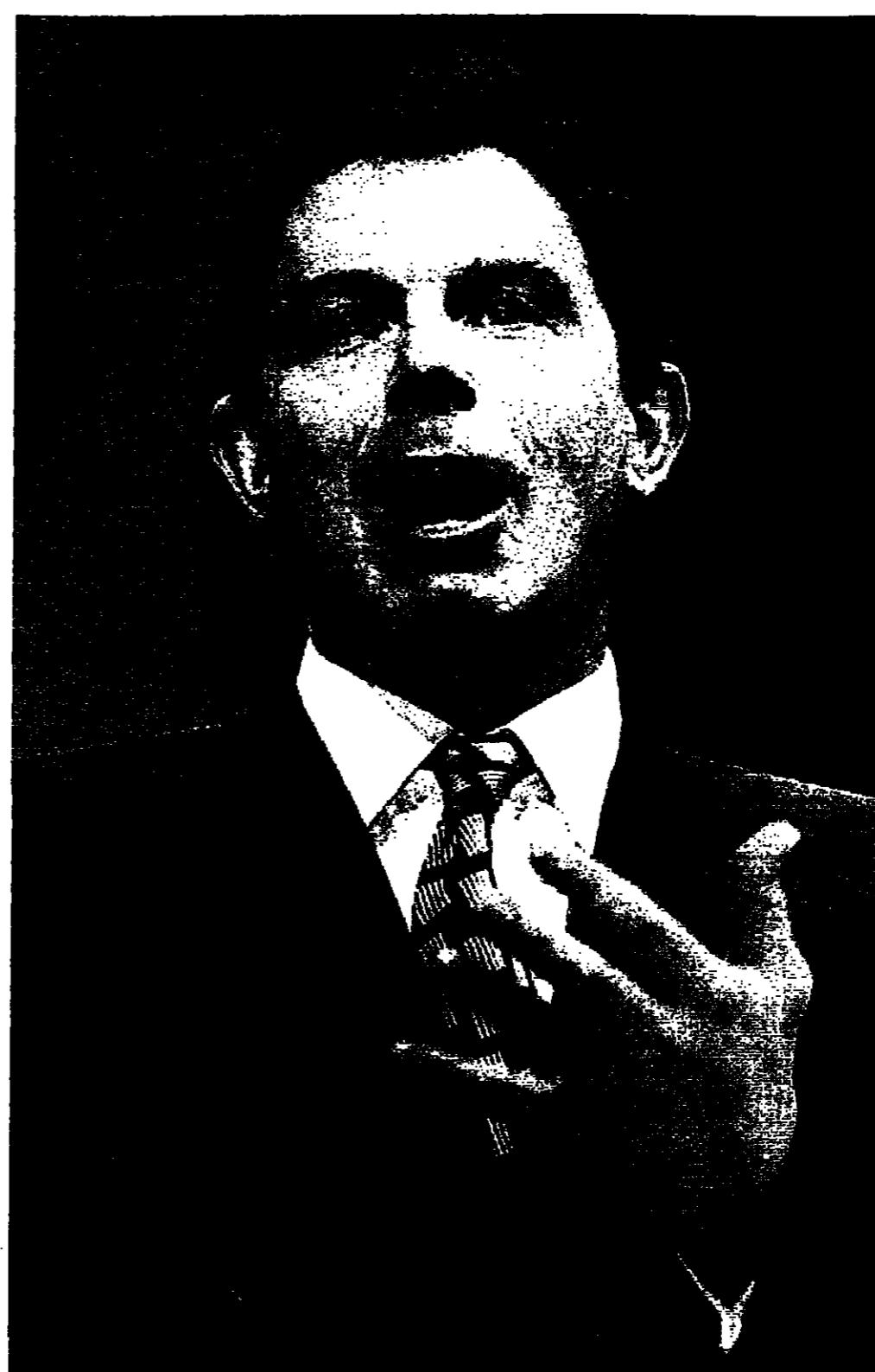
They were even conducting their policies against a backdrop of free trade and global transfers of capital and labour, worried about the efficiency of Germany and America, struggling with the social implications of new technologies but rejecting protectionist answers. They would have recognised what Blair called in New York "a new age of anxiety, of insecurity, that is social and economic". The big difference, of course, was that Britain under Victoria was the world dominant imperial power, infinitely stronger than she is under the second Elizabeth. That is a huge gap; but a politics that isn't based on huge ideological conflict, but on arguments about national modernisation, links the two periods.

That sort of perspective needed to even begin making sense of new Labour. But it is only a start. It doesn't answer the biggest question of all about Blair, which is whether a politician committed to all the great forces of modern times, including liberalisation and globalisation, can find local British answers for the age of anxiety. Can a better education and training system, funded without new borrowing and with higher taxes, bring two million people back into work? Labour's new radicalism on political reform strong enough to empower local authorities and communities, reviving some of the provincial enterprise that made Victorian Britain? Will it really help the poor, or turn them back on them? Is this now a disciplined party capable of winning and holding power for more than a few years before crumbling?

These are the important down-to-earth questions. But they can only be answered by experiencing Labour in power. If Blair's flirtation with Britain is consummated, perhaps this year, perhaps next, the confusion about new Labour may quickly evaporate. We won't need to ask whether he is really conservative or really a radical; his works will tell us.

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Blair concluded that part of the disaffection from modern politics



DIARY

No problems with us then, old boy?

With both the Government and the Opposition pledged to come down on any teachers that don't make the grade, nearly every school in the country lives in fear of the Ofsted inspection. Every school except one Wallington school in Kent is to be inspected this term, but, I suspect, it has no qualms at all about the inspectors liking what they see.

Among its old boys is Christopher Woodhead (below), no doubt once the terror of the lower fourth but now better known as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. I have been sent a copy of the headmaster's report made at the school's awards ceremony at the end of last term, in which Wallington's head, Dr Martin Haworth, recalled that "carried away by the honours and achievements of pupils, or by the nostalgia of his first visit to the school since boyhood, and in a rare moment of lucidity from writing official reports, he declared that 'Wallington is the best school in the country'."

The remark had been duly relayed to the local Ofsted inspector, Dr Haworth, noted. In good headmasterly style, he added: "What is more important is the boy coming through and the man close behind." Absolutely. But when the chief inspector of schools says it is the best school in the country in advance of an official inspection, that's worth a few house points too.

Pornographer and the columnist's daughter

Michael Grade, chief executive of Channel 4, has been given a rough time in the columns of the *Daily Mail* in recent

times. Labelled "Britain's pornographer-in-chief" repeatedly by the columnist Paul Johnson, purportedly for showing risqué material on his channel, the label seems to have taken root in the news columns of the paper and attached to Mr Grade whenever his name is mentioned. Mr Johnson's distaste for the alleged pornographer appears profound. So one can imagine Mr Grade's surprise when his executives told him that Paul Johnson had asked if Mr Grade would give his daughter some career advice as she wished to go to television.

Lineswoman gets the red card

Pity 34-year-old Nellie Viernot, A

lineswoman at international level for the

past year, she has been selected to be the first lineswoman to officiate in a French first division football match, later this week. Unfortunately, one of the two teams involved – the top-flight but currently beleaguered Paris Saint-Germain, who will be playing at their home ground, Parc des Princes – objects to her nomination. The match, they say, is a highly sensitive one: not a match, in other words, suitable for a woman to help officiate; if PSG lose, they will have lost the chance of the league championship; if their opponents, Martigues, lose, they risk relegation. The French football federation says it will stand by her. Paris St-Germain are incensed at this breach of male sporting bonding and is appealing to a higher authority – the French football league. My money is on someone somewhere banning her before kick-off.

Fascist chic at the Waldorf

As Shakespeare so nearly said: "The party's the thing." I'm looking forward to the gala charity premiere of the new *Richard III* film on Tuesday. The film, starring Sir Ian McKellen and Kristin Scott Thomas, is set in the 1930s, with Sir Ian's excellent Richard a fascist-style ruler. After seeing the film, we will all retire to the Waldorf Hotel for a themed buffet supper and dance. The dress code is "Thirties glamour". For *Richard III*? Wouldn't the Tower of London in blood-red times be more appropriate? But never let the plot get in the way of a good party. Now is the winter of our discontent

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Fashionable backing for the euro

The great European beauty contest is hotting up. In a bid for the Continent's hearts and minds, Chancellor Kohl has signed up the kind of cheekbones to win over even the harshest Euro-sceptic. Step forward the latest spokesperson for the single European currency – the supermodel Claudia Schiffer (right).

She has been enlisted to promote a positive attitude to the euro among her country folk, and who better, after all, to educate the public on an issue of such grave importance?

Warning: postal chess is a dangerous game

Within minutes of Thursday's shelling of the U.N. base near Tyre in Southern Lebanon, Red Cross staff were helping to evacuate and treat young Ibrahim Abed al-Yan and the other wounded. We made emergency deliveries of dressings and IV fluids to overcrowded hospitals. And a Red Cross convoy brought food, medical supplies and more doctors and nurses to provide essential medical care in Tyre and Sidon.

This is just part of the Red Cross aid effort in Southern Lebanon. 60,000 people are trapped by the violence and

CRISIS IN LEBANON



WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW

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Now we need your help to ensure aid continues to reach those who need it. Please call now and give a credit card donation or send your cheque or postal order with the coupon below. Your donation can save lives. Thank you.

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Rooting out the abusers

PHILLIPS We failed them as children, and we are failing them still. Over the past 25 years, hundreds of children entrusted to the care of the state have been raped and assaulted, bullied and abused by adults appointed in loco parentis to care for them. The authorities who worked on our behalf to license and regulate these homes, to recruit and train the workers who staff them, failed in their duty to look and listen to the cries of children who endured terrible tortures.

Today, at least 10 police forces are investigating claims of abuse in children's homes. Yet even when abuse is uncovered we often fail the victims. Reports are censored, scandals covered up and survivors of family abuse lack the support they need to politise. Worst of all, as our sister paper the *Independent on Sunday* made clear yesterday, we have not acted on the most important lessons from recent scandals.

The systematic violence against innocent children that emerges from these road investigations is shocking. Many of these homes are run by the public authorities (name); in practice they are exploited by networks of paedophiles. More than 100 children were abused by Frank Beck in homes in Leicestershire between 1973 and 1986. Staffordshire's infamous "pin-up" regime led to the abuse of a further 150 children between 1983 and 1989.

Add to that at least 100 children abused by Clwyd, North Wales, and 60 or more in Islington, north London. Sadly these could just be the tip of the iceberg. Gloucestershire police have begun the biggest inquiry ever into child abuse interviewing at least 2,000 former residents.

These last two inquiries, in Clwyd and Cheshire, must be published. We have an obligation to face up to the crimes committed against children by public servants, the chain of officials, professionals and

politicians who failed to stop the abuse must be held to account. The councillors in North Wales who tried to shield the Clwyd report from public scrutiny were wrong. As they draft a new version for publication, they must not censor significant findings.

Most important, the Government and local authorities must implement the many lessons from these reports. If a GP deliberately made a patient ill, he would be struck off the medical register. A lawyer caught using professional knowledge to defraud her clients would not be allowed to practise again.

People who look after children – especially the vulnerable and disturbed children who are placed in care – have far more power than GPs or doctors. Yet they remain largely unregulated; abusers are still able to move from one position of trust to another, leaving a trail of distraught children behind them. The Government should establish a general social services council to act as a professional and disciplinary body for care workers – similar to those in medicine and the law. There are bound to be practical difficulties in determining how far to spread the professional net. For example, should foster parents be included alongside the managers of residential homes? But these are not insurmountable obstacles.

This is an urgent task. Vulnerable members of the community, whether they be children, the elderly, or the chronically sick, all depend on the honour and professionalism of care workers. As community care expands, the Government should make sure it is able to regulate and register care workers to ensure those in care are better protected. If we fail to act now, as Alan Levy argues on the facing page, we will guilty of a gross dereliction of duty towards some of the most vulnerable members of our society.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lebanon: 'pusillanimous' reaction of politicians

Sir: As a Parliamentary visitor to Qana at the time that the shelling started nine days ago I welcome your condemnation of the utterly disproportionate Israeli response to Hezbollah with its inevitable result ("Israel must call off the killing", 19 April). In their desire to see the election of Shimon Peres, the West blatantly refuses to understand why Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri will not and, at this stage, cannot silence Hezbollah. The occupation of south Lebanon is illegal under international law. Hezbollah has parliamentary representation, and their support, inevitably, thrives under military attack. The dominant Syrians together with Mr Hariri remain confident that they will be able to exercise that control once Israel has withdrawn from Lebanese territory. It is only on this basis that peace can be achieved.

As Britain voted for the original Security Council resolution it is sad to see British politicians so pusillanimous in upholding it. Moral outrage combined with excessive understanding of the Israeli position amounts to acquiescence to a deliberate attack on a UN base which was a known refuge. It is not sufficient to condemn the loss of life – for who could disagree with that? Condemnation of Israel for the reckless irresponsibility of their action in Qana, their contempt for the UN shown in the preparedness to kill UN troops and their whole Grapes of Wrath strategy would be more appropriate.

Can we ever again suggest that Government or, indeed, Parliament takes an even-handed view of Middle East issues?

JOHN GUNNELL MP
(Morley & Leeds South, Lab)
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: In his report on Israeli military action in the Lebanon (20 April) Robert Fisk asks what

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Undeniable need for research investment

Sir: David Harrison's analysis of the crisis in university research is spot on (14 April). For many research projects the crisis will prove terminal unless the government reverses the 50 per cent cut in capital funding that it inflicted on universities in the last budget. Certainly he is in a world apart from southern Lebanon which is now bearing the brunt of the unchanging nature of Israeli military doctrine. There he could see practical demonstration of that doctrine as enunciated by David Ben-Gurion in his 1948 War Diary:

There is no question as to whether a reaction is necessary or not ...

What is necessary is cruel and strong reactions. We need precision in time, place and casualties.

If we know the family – strike mercilessly, women and children included. Otherwise the action is inefficient. At the place of action there is no need to distinguish between guilty and innocent ...

ST JOHN ARMSTRONG
Wells, Somerset

Sir: Naomi Katz (Letters, 17 April) asks whether the British Government would stand idly by if "the IRA was bombing buses and throwing Katyusha rockets into your back yard".

I don't believe that even the most rabid Tory backwoodsman has advocated that the British government should shell large areas of West Belfast or launch air strikes on Dublin to fight the IRA.

For Ms Katz to attempt to justify the shelling of civilians by claiming that Hezbollah is "linked in purpose" with the suicide bombers of Hamas, is further to confuse the issue. The conditions for the rocket attacks have grown directly out of the Israeli occupation by proxy of southern Lebanon. Equally, the conditions for Hezbollah to develop as a military power have been created by Israel's decision to treat Lebanon as merely another arena for its conflict with the Palestinians, and its refusal to respect the rights of the Lebanese people.

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comment

'Animal rights can damage your health'

Vital medical research – and the safety of scientists – is threatened by the rise of the anti-vivisectionists

This is Laboratory Animal Awareness Week. On Saturday, at a rally in Trafalgar Square, people brought flowers to lay at the feet of giant animal silhouettes marking the number of animals used in British laboratories.

The great majority of those who will be supporting the week or keeping a minute's silence for dead animals will no doubt be gentle animal-lovers horrified by pictures of monkeys with electrodes implanted in their brains or kittens with their eyes stitched up. But they also include supporters of more violent acts: animal rights attacks have been increasing – 622 in 1993, 934 in 1994, and likely to be up again for last year.

A few examples: Dr David White, immunologist, works on what may be the best hope for future transplants. He breeds pigs with a human gene which may produce unlimited organs for transplantation into humans without rejection. But his home has been wrecked three times, with "murderer" plastered in red paint across his sitting room walls. Then, despite every kind of security device, they put a hose through a skylight and left water pouring through for a whole weekend. Now the whereabouts of his laboratory is exceedingly secret. When he was working with Sir Roy Calne, the transplant surgeon, on the groundbreaking immuno-suppressant Cyclosporin A, a large bomb very nearly blew the hands off this distinguished surgeon.

Dr White says, "A lot of the protesters are very genuine, but dreadfully mis-

informed. I get these volunteers calling me, reading out a script prepared by their organisers. Recently I had a sweet old lady reading out abusively four-letter words she was plainly very uncomfortable with. So we talked and she told me she was on drugs for her rheumatism that her GP promised her were not tested on animals. I explained to her that this was utter nonsense. All drugs have to be tested on animals, for safety. People are misled by propaganda."

Professor Colin Blakemore, an outspoken defender of the use of animals, has been a frequent target. The last attack was at Christmas, when his children handled a parcel that turned out to be a bomb. Dr Vernon Coleman, the rabid anti-vivisectionist columnist in the *People*, had to be restrained by the courts from publishing Professor Blakemore's home address. Once Dr Coleman filled a double-page spread in the *Sun* with provocative lists of animal researchers, including work by Professor Terry Partridge at the Royal Post-graduate Medical School. Professor Partridge says: "It printed who we were, where we could be found, and grossly misrepresented our work on muscle disease, saying we used animals unnecessarily. We do use mice with muscular dystrophy for our research, because we have to."

Andrew Blake, 33, is in a wheelchair since the wasting disease Friedreich's Ataxia. He founded a group called The Seriously Ill for Medical Research, backed by Stephen Hawking and others. He has nearly 400 members with

diseases that might be cured through animal research. But he too regularly receives threats, the latest of which read, "Your support for vivisection makes you a target. You have been warned."

What effect has all this had on the progress of science? Some say it has at least tightened the rules, stopped some cavalier animal research and made scientists more gentle and careful. It has raised the cost of animal research, ensuring that scientists try every other method first. However, the Medical Research Council, Professor Blakemore, Dr White and many others say that the campaign has done great harm.

Britain has by far the most stringent laws in the world on laboratory animals. The anti-vivisectionists have forced laws on to the statute books that now make animal research so difficult

that more of it is going abroad. Development of new drugs and medical treatments is one of the few fields in which Britain excels. Yet the 1986 Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act and the 20 different sets of advice, codes of practice and guidelines that the Home Office has produced since then are now seriously impeding progress. Ten of these regulations have come in since 1994, indicating the growing influence of the animal lobbyists. These new regulations have cost universities millions of pounds – "Money that would have been far better spent on more research," says Professor Blakemore. "The regulations on temperature, air flow and living conditions are far more stringent than laws on working conditions for humans." The Research Defence Society (RDS) estimates that implementing just one 1992 Code of Practice cost £800m.

Researchers complain of the huge bureaucracy. The RDS says it now takes months to get a permit, and then requires monthly written reports to the Home Office. "We are seeing researchers turning abroad in frustration." All projects need three separate licences – one for the research itself, certifying its worth and ensuring that as few animals as possible are used. Then the lab has to be licensed, with trained keepers and a vet on call. Then each scientist doing the work needs another licence, requiring an extra compulsory training course and exam. "It means," says Professor Blakemore, "that even the most distin-

guished foreign Nobel prize-winner coming to Britain to collaborate on a project is not allowed to do so because they are not licensed. You can hardly ask them to take a course and a written exam, so they don't come. Instead, we have to move the research abroad."

Professor Partridge gives an example of the problems: he was working on grafting normal muscle cells on to mice with muscular dystrophy. He wanted to take the mice to Belgium for the second part of a collaborative research programme. But Home Office rules say no lab animals can be taken abroad, so the whole experiment was done in Belgium instead. The Animal Procedures Committee is conducting a review of the 1986 Act, filling researchers with dread of yet another restriction to come.

Dr Max Headley, who uses animals for his work on painkillers, was blown up in his car in 1990 but luckily escaped injury. "One of the worst effects of anti-vivisectionism has been most eminent scientists unwilling to stand up and explain their work. We have a deeply anti-science culture here compared with Europe, and we need to make the case for it, but people don't dare put their heads above the parapet."

On this occasion, though, the National Anti-Vivisection Society, organisers of Laboratory Animal Awareness Week, were the ones who failed to speak up. Countless calls requesting a conversation with a spokesperson or a fax of their leaflets yielded nothing at all from them.



POLLY TOYNBEE

'A lot of protesters are genuine but dreadfully misinformed'

Our dereliction of duty

Child abuser Frank Beck said it all in 1991: children in care are still at risk. By Allan Levy QC

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child carries enormous authority because it has been ratified by more than 180 countries, including Britain. It binds the Government to take all appropriate measures to protect children from abuse in all its forms, particularly sexual abuse. One area in which the Government is plainly failing to act effectively is in respect of some of Britain's most vulnerable and disturbed children in residential care homes.

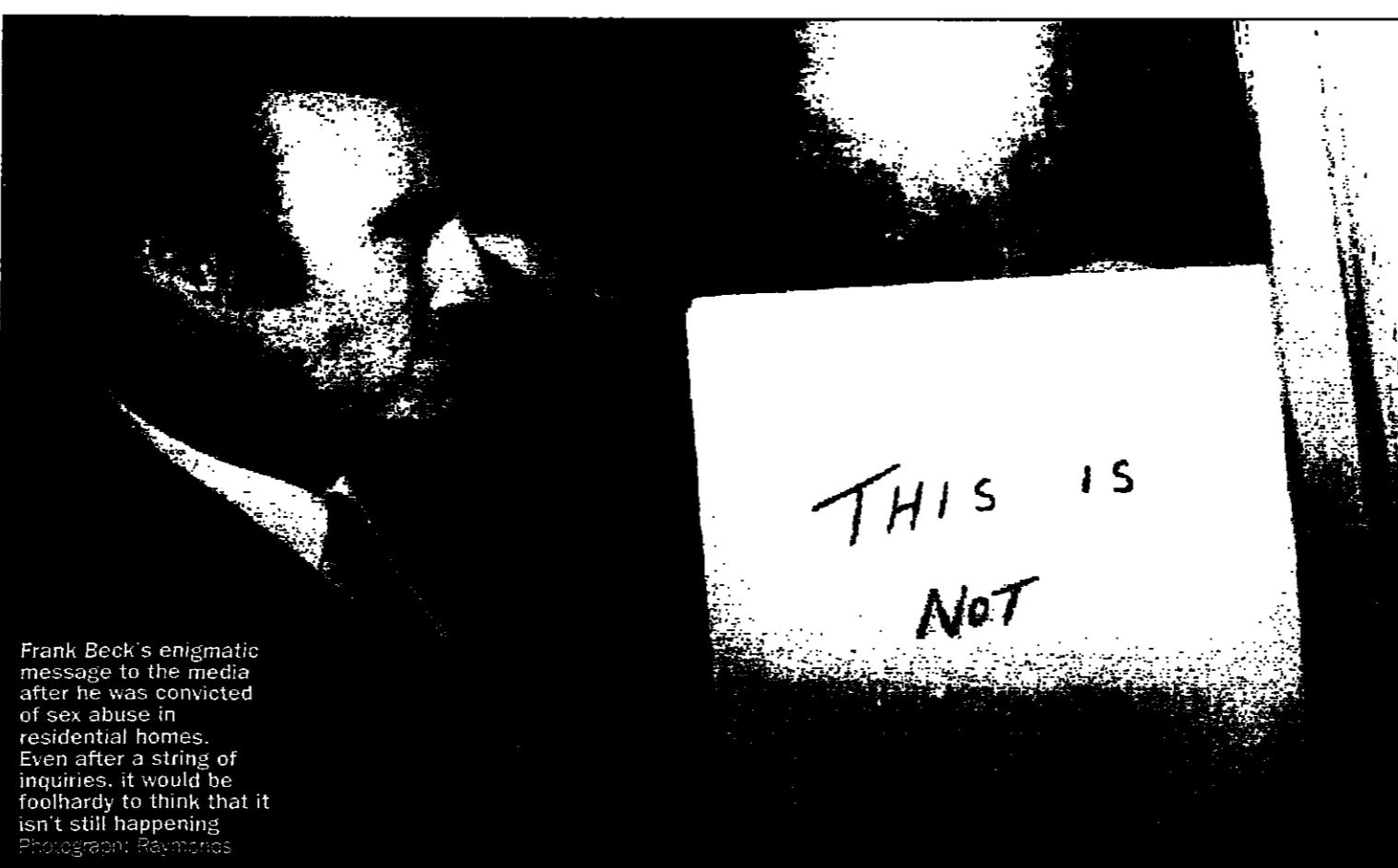
Scandal after scandal has surfaced since the pioneering "pin-down" inquiry in Staffordshire five years ago. Recommendations have been made, committees and support groups set up, and much said by politicians. The reality, however, is that today a child in residential care may well be a child in danger.

The Staffordshire inquiry in 1990 put a searchlight for the first time on children's homes. The uncovering of an unlawful regime of restraint, involving isolation, humiliation and confrontation in so-called "pin-down" rooms, received huge media coverage. A wide range of recommendations were made, covering recruitment, training and supervision of staff, conditions in the homes, inspections, complaints procedures, methods of restraint, protection from sex offenders and standards of child care.

These were considered to be issues of national importance, and the protection of children from abusers was highlighted. The report produced national shock waves and triggered an upsurge of interest in and concern about the whole field of residential child care. Local authorities were instructed to check their homes for similar problems and to report to the Secretary of State for Health within one month.

At the request of the Government, Sir William Utting, then Chief Inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate, produced urgently a review of residential child care. He concluded in August 1991 that it was an "an indispensable service", and that the homes needed to be managed, inspected and monitored carefully and staffed with professionally qualified personnel. He noted that one of the major problems was that the residential care of children was commonly regarded as an unimportant, residual activity, whereas the reality was very different. He also pointed out that 70 per cent of the staff employed in homes lacked a relevant qualification.

Following the Utting report, the Children's Homes Regulations 1991 were brought in, an expert group was set up to examine appropriate training, and the Howe report considered residential child staff. Howe recommended major improvements in management, including a requirement that external managers should be experienced or trained in residential care. The topics



Frank Beck's enigmatic message to the media after he was convicted of sex abuse in residential homes. Even after a string of inquiries, it would be foolhardy to think that it isn't still happening

Photograph: Raymonds

of supervision and training, support of staff under stress and better career opportunities were again considered.

Further abuse that came to light in 1992 and 1993 in Wales (Ty Mawr), Sheffield and Leicestershire deepened the concern about children in residential care and reinforced the urgent need for the recommendations already made to be implemented. After the Utting report, the then minister for health, Virginia Bottomley, said that the Government accepted the thrust of all the recommendations and "would be taking action forward urgently to make the best use of available resources".

The Leicestershire inquiry, which covered sexual abuse of children by Frank Beck between 1973 and 1986, went over by now familiar ground, including failures regarding recruitment of staff, complaints and investigation procedures. The report noted that "it would not be wise for anyone to approach this report on the basis that it all happened a long time ago and that nothing like it could ever happen again". The Leicester inquiry led to the Warner committee considering in particular selection and recruitment methods and criteria for staff working in children's homes.

The Warner report expressed concern that "there have been so many

inquiries whose findings seem to have gone largely unheeded by the service as a whole". That report noted that there were far too many examples of poor management and that it was essential that management, staffing levels, training and support for staff were improved. The physical condition of many homes needed urgent attention and the status of children's homes and their staff had to be raised. In response, the Government set up the

Despite all the expert attention, we appear to be no nearer to solving the problem

Support Force for Children's Residential Care, which was to last two years and offer advice to individual authorities on the relevant issues.

Yet despite all the expert attention these scandals have received, we appear to be no nearer to providing an effective solution to the problem. This amounts to a dereliction of duty to children in public care. Further scandals have surfaced in Northumberland, Islington, Cheshire and par-

ticularly North Wales. Private children's homes have also come under the spotlight, and last year one social services director complained about the Government's policy of deregulation, which allows private homes to operate with a minimum of outside supervision.

One of the children who suffered under the pin-down regime said that she was not frightened when she ran away from a particular residential home in Staffordshire because wherever she went could only be better than where she had come from. It would be foolhardy to think that abuse is not happening now in children's homes and that it will not occur in the future.

It is clear that there is a failure of leadership, both on a national and a local level. The Government in particular must provide a practical lead in dealing with a national problem requiring oversight, co-ordination and action. The findings and recommendations of numerous inquiries have gone largely unheeded.

The ethos of deregulation and the placing of responsibility locally will not do. The running down of the social services inspectorate, which has a vital role to play, is unacceptable. Recommendations repeatedly made over the years for an effective register of

individuals convicted of relevant offences must actually be heeded.

A general social services council is obviously necessary in order to set and monitor standards for care workers. Improved training, better systems of supervision and inspection and the registration of homes are other vital matters.

Overall, children merit a specific individual who will work for change and for their protection. Other countries have either a minister for children, for example Ireland, or a children's rights commissioner, as in New Zealand and Sweden.

Only, for instance, if effective recruitment methods are in place will abusers be deterred from insinuating themselves into homes. A company set up recently offering skilled vetting procedures has gone out of business because its services were not taken up.

If abuse does occur, there must be proper complaints procedures and effective action.

Residential care is recognised as an important resource for our society. But it must now be properly resourced, if it is to provide a safe haven for children. We owe nothing less than this to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The writer chaired the Staffordshire "pin-down" inquiry in 1990-91.

Docklands needs marathon effort

ANOTHER VIEW

Stephen Molyneaux

House, the most badly damaged block, have yet to learn whether the Government will provide any new money. British Telecom has been unsympathetic. I wrote to Sir Ian Vallance, BT's chairman, about the company's decision to impose reconnection fees after the blast. His office replied: "His heart goes out to the local community." But it declined to waive the charges.

Tower Hamlets council has done its best. Staff collected three tons of broken glass and replaced more than a thousand windows and doors. Our teachers got the local primary and nursery school reopened three days after the

blast. They are entitled to apply, and have failed to produce an application form.

The main problem would seem to be that applicants are expected to have taken out insurance against terrorist attacks. Yet this had become prohibitively expensive for Tower Hamlets, given its large number of properties and an increase in premiums that followed the earlier, unsuccessful attempt to blow up the Canary Wharf tower.

So, much as everyone on the Isle of Dogs enjoyed yesterday's race, local people kept asking me, "If they can do all this with the Marathon, why can't something be done to help us?"

When a tragedy like this occurs in America, the President declares a state of emergency. In Northern Ireland, the Government coups out. Yet here in mainland Britain, local councils and voluntary groups are expected to pick up the pieces and grovel to civil servants, who behave as though they wish they would go away.

The Government must revise the entry criteria that is barring families and local authorities from immediate financial assistance. We need a properly co-ordinated national response to disasters like the Docklands bombing to be up and running before the next London marathon gets under way.

The writer is a Labour councillor for Millwall ward on the Isle of Dogs.

My daft learned friend: shut up!

Martin Mears, head of the Law Society, has dubbed women 'the enemy'. Eileen Pembridge replies

It is becoming increasingly difficult to read newspaper reports of the public utterances of Martin Mears, president of the Law Society, because it is increasingly obvious that they are given such prominence only because he is the elected leader of our profession and therefore shows us all up in a poor light. It is the latest subtle twist to lawyer-bashing.

When I was asked to write a riposte to his "arguments" on women and the law in his speech to women lawyers at a conference on Saturday, I hesitated on the basis that, in framing a rebuttal, I was dignifying these motley pontifications with a label they did not merit. I cannot imagine for a moment that any paper would give even one column-inch to his views on the "zealotry" of women if he did not hold his current position.

It is his prominence which earns him the coverage – at our expense – and I am fed up with the sight of churlish journalists gleefully at having such copy to play with at otherwise serious and worthy gatherings. It is not, after all, the tenets of the Flat Earth Society that call for courage – it is the discovery that the editor of the *National Geographic* is a card-carrying member of it.

Thus it is with us. Pit the poor solicitor – underpaid and undervalued as a conveyancer, ground down and abused for long unpaid hours on legal aid work – and now a clown for a leader, one who holds out forcefully that there is no discrimination against women, no prejudice, no glass ceiling, no sexual harassment, no problem – save our own Machiavellian perceptions. Over the past year or so several surveys have highlighted women's frustration, fear, or ire, at being held back, channelled into traditionally female fields of work, denied partnerships, at being sexually harassed or demeaned, at facing the old choice of being a "lad" (down the pub or up the club) or opting out. Women with children usually come off worst.

Mears denies any of this. He points to the fact that today half of those solicitors under 30 are women and revels at dismissing the figures showing them going so far and no further. He says that women should be at home tending their families, not "elbowing their way to the top", and he plays on male fears of maternity leave and unjust accusations of sexual harassment. He moves on to lambast what he calls the whole dis-

The writer is a council member of the Law Society and stood against Martin Mears for the presidency of the Law Society in 1995.

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LINGUAPHONE



National Power set to raise Southern bid

MICHAEL HARRISON

National Power is today expected to renew its bid for Southern Electric with an offer of around £9.90 a share, valuing the company at just under £2.6bn.

The renewed bid is designed to fend off a threatened £8bn takeover of National Power by Southern Company, the giant American utility.

National Power's offer will be

conditional on the deal being waved through by Trade and Industry Secretary Ian Lang.

In an attempt to rush the offer through, National Power may dispense with the conventional 60-day bid timetable in favour of a 21-day bid.

Southern Company of Atlanta, Georgia, was meanwhile reviewing its options yesterday as it became clear that National Power was intent on pursuing an independent strategy.

"There is a distinct possibil-

ity that Southern will not bid and it is getting more probable with every move National Power makes."

The Government is expected to announce later this week whether it will allow the National Power-Southern Electric merger to proceed.

The takeover has already been approved with only minimal conditions by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Ministers may however, decide

to impose tougher conditions on the merger to protect competition and prevent National Power abusing its dominant position in the electricity pool, the wholesale market for England and Wales.

National Power's initial bid last October was worth £10.10 a share and valued Southern Electric at £2.8bn but since then it has demerged its stake in the National Grid. Its fresh bid of around £9.90 compares

with last Friday's closing price of £8.59.

National Power is likely to justify the healthy premium on the grounds that its price will include the final dividend Southern Electric is paying. Since last October Southern Electric has also benefited from the £600m sale of First Hydron to Mission Energy of the US.

National Power's manoeuvres since Southern Company made its merger approach last

Tuesday are said to have been aimed at "extremely depressing" in the American camp.

In addition to its renewed bid, National Power announced the £1.7bn sale last Friday of 4,000 megawatts of power station capacity to the Hanson-owned Eastern Electricity.

If Southern did pull out, it could turn its attention to a deal with PowerGen, or build its own power stations in Britain.

Tax juggling gave Glaxo £132m boost

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Glaxo Wellcome yesterday rejected any suggestion that it had not provided fully for huge potential tax liabilities following revelations that up to half the drugs group's recent earnings growth may have come from international tax juggling.

Accounts filed recently by Glaxo's manufacturing operation in Singapore show that tax provisions released over the past two and a half years to December have boosted group profits by £132m.

In the two years to June 1995, which cover most of this period, Glaxo's after-tax profits – excluding last year's Wellcome acquisition – grew by £25m. This suggests that approaching half the growth in group profits may have been derived from the clever use of tax allowances rather than from the underlying business.

Glaxo yesterday refused to comment on the effect of tax on its recent earnings, although sources confirmed the accuracy of the figures. However, a spokesman for the group reiterated that all past tax liabilities had been fully provided for.

"The Singapore operation was set up 10 years ago and the benefit derived from it in the terms of taxation and profitability has been adequately disclosed and widely known. It has been disclosed in annual reports for many years."

Glaxo's flagging underlying growth revealed by the figures helps explain why the group was so anxious to seal last year's £9.3bn takeover of rival drugs group Wellcome.

The addition of Wellcome is expected to boost future earnings but it now also transpires that, separately, the Singapore businesses were a key element in financing the deal.

Documents show that £2bn, equivalent to a third of the cash element of the total consideration for Wellcome, was trans-

mited to the UK from Singapore three months after the takeover.

It is also thought the Singapore operation helped refine disastrous treasury operations in Bermuda, where losses on an ill-judged bond portfolio eventually reached £15m.

The huge gains available to the group in minimising tax also shed light on the drug giant's long-running battle to prevent the Inland Revenue re-opening old tax accounts filed before 1986 to investigate the legitimacy of so-called "transfer pricing" arrangements between international subsidiaries.

Glaxo last year lost a High Court case against the Inland Revenue involving transfer pricing and its appeal to the Court of Appeal was thrown out at the end of 1995. It is now involved in discussions with the tax authorities to see if the matter can be settled out of court, but no early resolution is expected.

The dispute involves early tax years in the 1980s when Glaxo was growing rapidly on the back of Zantac, its best-selling anti-ulcer drug, and is thought to involve the Singapore business. The operation, which makes Zantac, is taxed at a lower rate than typical elsewhere in the world. Last year the original Glaxo group had a tax rate of 39.5 per cent against 37 per cent at the new Wellcome operations.

Notes in Glaxo's accounts have for some years drawn attention to the continuing dispute with the tax authorities. But the revelation that money was transferred from Singapore sits oddly with a statement by Glaxo last year that no provision beyond that made in the accounts had been made for "taxation which would arise on the distribution of profits retained by overseas subsidiary and associated undertakings in London set aside for use in the business".

Building societies and big banks are expected today to report an increase in mortgage loans following other signs of life in the housing market. House prices have started to climb, and estate agents have reported a noticeable increase in numbers of customers.

Fresh signs that consumer confidence is picking up are expected this week from figures on March mortgage lending due today and retail sales on Tuesday.

Following last week's run of good news, which gave the Government hope that the economic tide will turn in its favour in good time for the general election, further buoyancy could help shares in London set fresh records.

"Perky figures this week will help keep the FTSE going up," said Bob Semple, UK equity strategist at NatWest Markets.

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New figures released this morning show a further surge in spending on debit and credit cards last month. Spending on plastic grew 23.4 per cent in the year to March, when it topped £6bn for the first month.

Debit card spending expanded by a third during the year to March. Credit card spending grew 16.8 per cent, the highest since last July, according to the Credit Card Re-

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Use of plastic cards at high street retailers was particularly strong, growing 27 per cent in the 12 months to March, with growth spread evenly among different types of store.

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Credit card borrowing has grown significantly faster than spending. It was up 17 per cent, compared with 8 per cent growth in 1994. It was the first time since 1991 – before the recession – that card holders increased their borrowing faster than their spending.

Lloyd's Bank economists predict in a report today that consumer spending will grow faster this year than at any time since the 1989 boom.

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The recent surge follows a 1 per cent rise in the amount spent using debit and credit cards in 1995, or 15 per cent on credit cards and 26 per cent on debit cards. Debit cards are expected to overtake credit cards by the year 2000 if they keep up the current pace of growth.

Credit card borrowing has grown significantly faster than spending. It was up 17 per cent, compared with 8 per cent growth in 1994. It was the first time since 1991 – before the recession – that card holders increased their borrowing faster than their spending.

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The Labour Party attempted to burst the bubble by releasing new figures from Dun & Bradstreet showing

business



GAVYN DAVIES

There are reasons to think that a further rise in tactical voting is more likely than not. If it happens, the Conservatives will be in real trouble'

Losing the next election should tax even Labour

Some elements of the Labour Party were showing signs this weekend of embarking on the one route that could yet lead to electoral defeat: the route marked "higher taxes". A poll in the *Sunday Times* showed that a significant minority of Labour backbenchers, apparently forgetting the blindingly obvious lessons of the last four general elections, would like to levy a 50p top rate of tax at a starting income level of around £40,000. As an object lesson on how to pluck defeat out of the jaws of certain victory, this takes some beating.

Nevertheless, a study I have been doing of the psychological state of the nation shows how hard it will be for the unreformed elements in the Labour Party to hand victory over to the Tories, however determined they may be. Psephology, it is true, took a nasty knock in the 1992 general election, and has barely since recovered. But I would offer the following five "facts" to consider, all of which suggest that the Tories face an even more difficult task than has been commonly realised if they are to be re-elected.

1. The finishing line is different for the two parties. Because of the way that the minor parties will presumably choose to vote after the election, Labour needs fewer of its own MPs than the Tories to form a government. Specifically, either side needs 326 votes in the Commons to form a government. The Conservatives can count on the support of 12 Ulster members, meaning that they need 314 seats of their own to stay in office.

Meanwhile, Labour will probably attract the support of at least 36 members of other minor parties (Liberal Democrats, National

lists and the SDLP), implying that it needs only 290 seats of its own to form a government – 14 less than the Conservatives.

2. The electoral system is now skewed against the Tories. In 1992, the gap in seats between the two main parties (65) was far smaller than would have been expected, given the fact that the Tories led Labour by eight points in the popular vote across the country. Each winning Labour MP required fewer voters than each winning Tory, partly because Labour seats were smaller, and turnout was lower, and partly because the Tories piled up needlessly large majorities in many seats. This problem has been only partially redressed by the subsequent Boundary Commission changes, which will re-allocate only about six extra seats to the Tories (compared with the 20 generally expected beforehand).

If there are uniform swings in all seats across the country next time (admittedly a big if), then Labour requires a much smaller share of the popular vote to reach its finishing line target than the Tories.

In fact, if Labour obtains 36.37 per cent of the popular vote (compared with 34.4 per cent last time), it will probably be able to form a minority government. With 39 per cent of the vote, it could end up with an overall majority. Meanwhile the Conservatives need 40.41 per cent to form a minority government and 41.42 per cent to win an outright majority.

3. Regional swings seem to be favouring Labour. The arithmetic just quoted assumes uniform national swings, but this no longer happens in Britain. Nowadays, there is

great variation between regions and between different types of seats within regions. This makes it harder to translate national shares of the vote into seats, but as far as we can tell, the Tories may end up doing worse than they would with uniform swings. The Gallup 9000 poll reveals that the smallest swings to Labour since 1992 are in its areas of greatest strength – Scotland and Wales – while the greatest swings are in areas where the marginals are concentrated – the North-west, the West Midlands and London. According to David Walton, of Goldman Sachs, these regional variations would add about 20 seats to the Labour total, compared with the operation of uniform national swings.

4. Tactical voting is becoming more important. Conventional wisdom at Annie's Bar in Westminster is that tactical voting is significant only in by-elections. Not so. According to an excellent analysis by John Curtice

and Michael Steed in the Nuffield study of the 1992 election, there has been a creeping tendency for tactical voting to spread in key seats for at least two general elections. Last time, this particularly helped Labour in two-party marginals versus the Conservatives, since in these seats there was a disproportionate squeeze on the Liberal Democrat vote. The swing to Labour in such marginals was 1.2 per cent greater than in the rest of the country – which may not sound much, but which probably delivered a handful of otherwise unwinnable seats to Labour.

Nobody can say whether tactical voting will be even more significant next time. Certainly, the change in constituency boundaries will make tactical voting more problematic.

But with the national relationship between Labour and Liberal Democrat parties much warmer than before, and with Labour breathing down the necks of Tory incumbents in many more seats, especially in the south of England, there are reasons to think that a further rise in tactical voting is more likely than not. If it happens, the Conservatives will be in real trouble.

5. The polls may be wrong, but they cannot be that wrong. Neither John Major nor Tony Blair is choosing to believe the present opinion poll results – the first to avoid despair, the second to avoid complacency. Both are inclined to believe that much of the Labour lead is illusory, and that there may still be some lying in responses to the pollsters. But how much of the Labour lead can these factors really account for? The final opinion polls before the 1992 election

showed the likely result as a dead heat; the exit polls on the day showed a four-point Labour lead; and the actual result was an eight-point win for the Government. According to Peter Kellner, three points of the eight-point polling error were due to a late swing and to differential turnout, which may go either way next time. A further two to three points were due to sampling error (uncovering too few Tory voters in remote rural areas, etc), a problem that should now have been eliminated. This leaves about two to three points for lying to the pollsters. Even if this is still happening, which is uncertain, it is a drop in the bucket compared with the 30-point Labour lead shown in recent opinion polls.

As the graph shows, the opposition lead is not only much larger than it was in previous parliaments, but it has persisted for much longer than ever before. And one final war game shows how difficult the Government's task now is. About a year before the 1992 election, the polls showed Labour roughly eight points ahead, while on election day the Tories won by the same amount. Hence the sum of polling error and the final year swing back to the Government was equivalent to 16 points.

It would need twice this swing back to the Government in the next 12 months for John Major to win again.

The arithmetic, therefore, looks daunting for the Tories. But the tax-raising minority of Labour backbenchers may still be sufficiently obtuse to engineer a shock defeat for their party. With enemies like these, Mr Major must be thinking, who needs friends?

A year ago the Pru's reputation was taking a battering. Now the insurer is riding high. Its chief executive talked to Nic Cicutti



Peter Davis: A sudden decision. Photograph: David Sandison

A change of strategy for changing times

THE MONDAY INTERVIEW
PETER DAVIES

What a difference a year makes. Barely 12 months ago, the Prudential risked becoming one of the most unpopular insurers in Britain.

Under its former chief executive, Mick Newmarch, the company faced widespread scepticism as it doggedly denied suggestions that its salesforce was in any way implicated in the pension transfer scandal.

Mr Newmarch, doughty and well respected, had become identified with a tough, no-nonsense approach which initially irritated and later infuriated both Government and financial regulators.

His sudden departure 13 months ago against a background of insider dealing allegations, later proved to be completely untrue, marked a new low for Prudential.

Then came Peter Davis, who professed himself slightly surprised by his appointment. A former chief executive at Reed, his previous experience lay

largely in the supermarkets sector, most recently a 10-year stint ("good years", he says) at J Sainsbury. After his departure from Reed, he was asked to join the Pru board in 1994.

Mr Newmarch's shock departure meant a sudden decision for Mr Davis himself: "I was about to do something else and had committed myself elsewhere. I was on the nominations committee because I was not a candidate. They met without me and Sir Martin Jacobson, the chairman, said, 'We actually think you should do it'. So I then had to extricate myself from the other commitment."

Today, the company is riding high. In March, barely a year after his appointment as Prudential group chief executive, the company reported record operating profits of £304m.

Last week, the Pru announced a 12 per cent increase in worldwide premium income for the first three months of the year, up to £1.6bn. In the UK,

where the company's problems were particularly acute, sales of single premium products were up 34 per cent to £866m, the highest quarterly total for more than two years.

It would be easy to deduce from this that Mr Davis is solely responsible for the rapid turnaround in the fortunes of the Pru.

In fact, Mr Davis is quick to point out that the past year's successes are not down to him alone: "I can't claim any credit for them. The real improvement in profit came out of the US, because of actions that Mick Newmarch took in '92 and '93 to change the way the companies were run and change the management. This is a very long-term business."

Certainly, there have been changes since Mr Davis was appointed in March last year. One of them has been the more emollient approach by the Pru towards the issues of industry regulation.

Another noticeable difference is in the company's medium-term strategy. Mr Davis believes that the UK provides the Prudential with one of the biggest challenges – and opportunities – it is likely to face over the next few years. "There is a growing tendency towards convergence, where the banks, building societies and life companies are coming together. Banks are buying building societies, building societies are opening life companies."

"In the next five years, I think we will see the emergence of six or seven major retail consumer financial players and I want the Prudential to be

among them." This view of the changing face of the UK financial services industry led Prudential to announce it will launch its own telephone-based banking service later this year.

As a first step, Prudential will bring under its roof the £700m-plus of mortgages it arranges each year.

It also wants to retain a significant proportion of the £1bn paid out annually on its funding policies through other lenders, enticing them into deposit-style accounts.

Even so, Mr Davis notes that the pace of change is accelerating. Hence Prudential's stated wish to acquire either a building society or a UK life company. "We are going to find ourselves competing with much larger organisations who will have an integrated product range, from banking right through to life products."

Mr Davis refuses to be drawn on the Prudential's takeover preferences. "The balance is in favour of a life company but we are also studying whether we would achieve our objectives as well, or better, through a building society."

Positioning the Prudential for the changes taking place within the UK industry also means taking on board the issues that affect its work in the next few years. Foremost among them has been the regulation and downturn in sales after the pension mis-selling problem exploded in 1993.

Despite the recent tail-off in sales, people will sooner or later be forced to return to the subject of personal pensions. Mr Davis argues, "I would be surprised if occupational pensions schemes continue in quite the same way. Many companies have been able to take a holidays from contributions because of surpluses created by good equity markets in the eighties and the reduction of workforces. I don't believe that is going to continue forever."

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SCIENCE

Encounter with a distant stranger

Before Pluto retreats from Earth on its 240-year circuit of the Sun, scientists are desperate to uncover its secrets. Peter Bond reports

Which is the farthest planet from the Sun? Although the answer given by all the textbooks is Pluto, this is not entirely true. For 20 years, during each 240-year circuit around the Sun, Pluto slips inside the orbit of Neptune and becomes the eighth planet from the Sun. This rare episode will come to an end in 1999, when Pluto will regain its status as the planetary outpost of the Solar System.

Such orbital idiosyncrasies is of great significance for scientists hoping to learn more about this peculiar world. At present, Pluto is relatively close, about 4.5bn kilometres from the Sun. However, its orbit is highly elliptical so that by the year 2113 it will have drifted out to almost 7.5bn kilometres – an increase of two-thirds in distance.

As if this remoteness was not enough, astronomers also have to contend with Pluto's tiny size. Just 2,300km across, Pluto is much smaller than our Moon. Not surprisingly, astronomers have struggled to piece together a coherent picture of

this enigmatic object since its discovery in 1930. Another 48 years went by before the discovery of its moon, Charon.

Before the planet retreats into the depths of space and once more becomes a bleak, frozen ice ball, Nasa, the US space agency, is desperately attempting to put together a spacecraft reconnaissance mission. The current plan, dubbed Pluto Express, is to send two small spacecraft to the Pluto-Charon system. As both objects rotate once every 6.3 days, the second craft, targeted to arrive 3.2 days after the first, would be able to survey regions hidden in darkness during the initial approach.

In the Eighties, when Charon and Pluto began a series of mutual eclipses, astronomers were able to piece together the first maps of surface brightness. Evidence emerged of brighter polar regions, possibly covered in frost. Then, in 1988, came the revelation that Pluto had a thin atmosphere, probably composed of nitrogen or methane. The latest breakthrough has

been provided by the Hubble Space Telescope. From its advantageous viewpoint above Earth's turbulent atmosphere, pictures taken with European Space Agency's Faint Object Camera have observed details on the surface for the first time.

After computer processing, Hubble's snapshots, taking during one complete Plutonian rotation, reveal major variations in brightness across the entire planet. "I don't know anything in the outer Solar System that looks this complex," says team member Dr Alan Stern, of Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado.

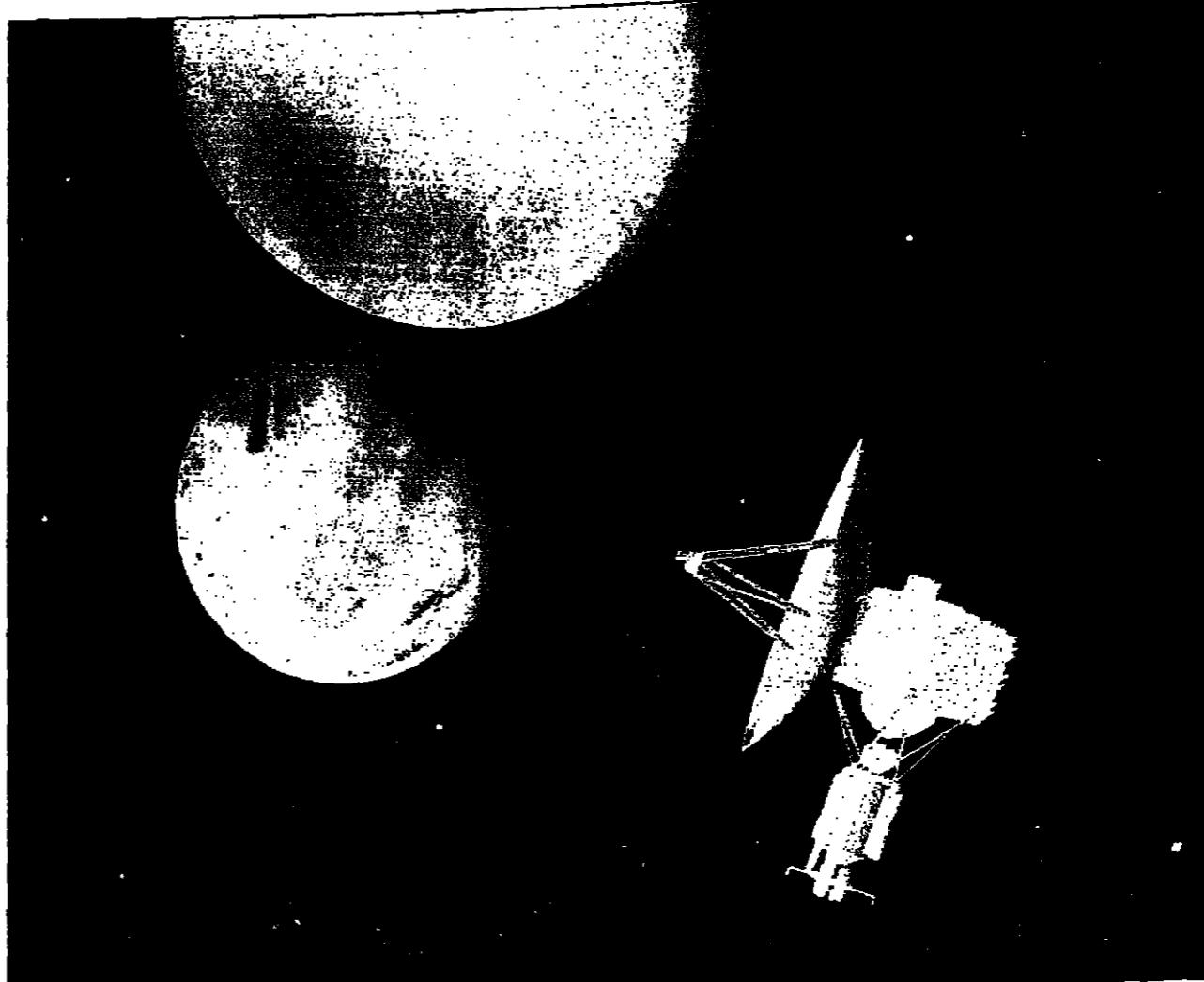
Apart from the previously known bright polar regions, the images show a "ragged" north polar cap bisected by a dark strip, a bright spot seen rotating with the planet, a cluster of dark spots and a bright linear marking.

Speculation is rife over what these markings might represent. Some may be topographic features such as basins and fresh craters. The most favoured explanation is dra-

matic seasonal changes resulting from Pluto's orbit. During the 200-year-long winter, gases freeze and settle on to the icy wastes. When the short warm season returns, these frosts probably turn back into a gas. As a result, some regions are bright like new snow while others resemble dirty snow. The brighter deposits are probably nitrogen frost deposited during the past few decades, while the grey areas may be coated in residues of hydrocarbons, where ultraviolet sunlight and cosmic rays have chemically altered the methane frost.

At present, Pluto is enjoying its short summer break. As the dirty ices are evaporated, the thin atmosphere swells and evolves. All too soon the winter will return and the gases will freeze out once more, forming a fresh, frosty coating.

Despite public support from the Nasa director, Dan Goldin, Pluto Express scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, are affected by the financial constraints on all space activities.



Pluto Express: Nasa wants to send two spacecraft to Pluto (top) and its moon, Charon

Nasa/Science Photo Library

The challenge is to present a plan that could be given the go-ahead by Congress in 1998 or 1999, allowing the launches to proceed in 2001, with Pluto flybys in 2012-2013. Current estimates put the cost of such a mission at around \$300m.

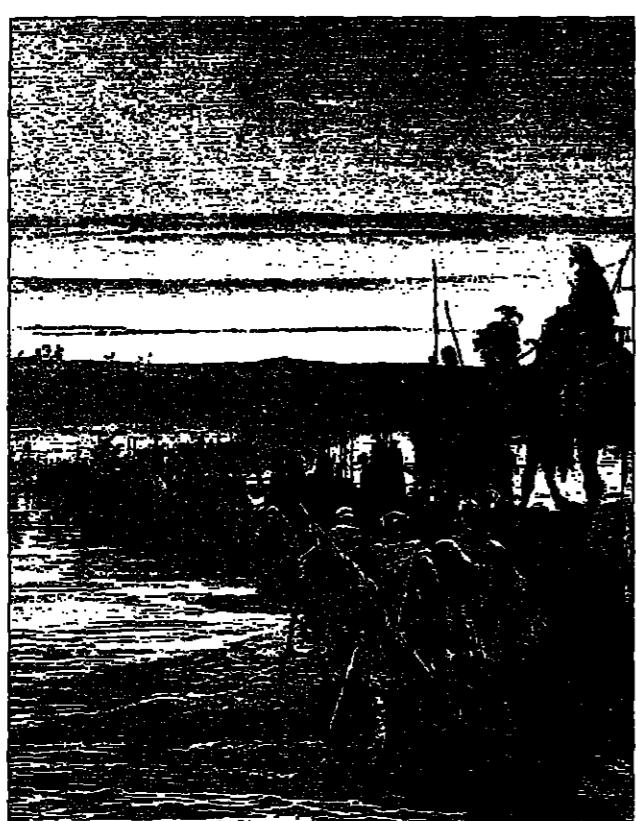
In order to achieve this, plan-

ners are hoping to use lower-cost Russian rockets to boost the craft on their way. The spacecraft themselves will weigh no more than 100kg (220lb) yet have sufficient computer power to probe the planet in the visible, infrared, ultraviolet and radio regions of the electromagnetic spectrum.

According to the Pluto Express project manager, Robert Staehle, both Pluto and Charon could be mapped with a global resolution of around 1km, with spot coverage revealing features as small as 100 metres across.

Does America still have the vision and purpose to grasp this

rare opportunity? If Pluto Express remains grounded, several lifetimes will pass before a similar mission can be launched. The last time Pluto was this close to the Sun, King George II was on the throne and Britain still ruled the American colonies.



The Israelites: what was 'manna from Heaven'? Hulton Getty

The beetle cocoon that was manna for Moses

Molecule of the month: John Emsley looks at trehalose

Passover, the religious festival celebrated by Jews this month, commemorates the night when the Angel of Death spared the Israelites but killed the first-born of their Egyptian masters. The disaster persuaded the Egyptians to release their slaves, and so began their 40 years in the wilderness. Within a few weeks the Israelites were starving, so Moses appealed to God, who promised: "I will rain down bread from Heaven for you", [Exodus 16] and delivered the mysterious, but nutritious, manna which was "white like coriander seed and tasted like a wafer made with honey".

This Heaven-sent sweetness might again be saving lives – thanks to a British company.

Manna was almost certainly trehalose, a white crystalline carbohydrate made of two glucose molecules joined together. It is one of very few naturally occurring molecules that taste sweet, although it is only half as

sweet as sugar. What the Israelites were gathering was the cocoon of the parasitic beetle *Tribolium castaneum* from which trehalose gets its name, and which explains Moses' warning not to boil it: "Some, however, did not listen ... and it became full of maggots and stank". The cocoons, found on thorn bushes in the Middle East, are highly nutritious, consisting of 30 per cent trehalose plus protein.

Trehalose occurs in honey, bread, beer, wine and vinegar, while Japanese shiitake mushrooms and baker's yeast contain as much as 20 per cent.

Trehalose has remarkable preserving power and is produced by creatures that lie dormant under drought conditions. Some plants can lose over 95 per cent of their water content and still survive, thanks to the trehalose in their cells.

John Crowe, of the University

of California at Davis, suggested that trehalose has the right shape to replace water molecules around vital cell proteins and prevent them from collapsing. Michael Burke, of Oregon State University, believes that trehalose forms a supportive "glass" like that of boiled sweets within tissues.

Steve Ring of the Institute of Food Research at Norwich, has shown that small amounts of protein are needed to keep trehalose glass stable at 37°C and prevent it becoming opaque and microcrystalline.

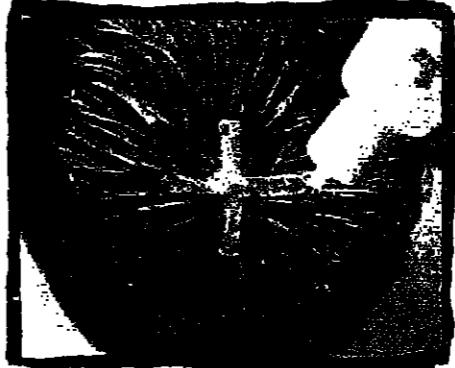
Trehalose is now being used

as a preservative for antibodies, vaccines, enzymes and blood coagulation factors.

In 1985, Bruce Roser discovered that if trehalose was added to solutions of proteins like these, which were then dehydrated, the products could be stored at temperatures above 40°C and when rehydrated were still active. This offers an alternative way of preserving medical supplies in Third World countries, where 90 per cent of vaccines are wasted through lack of refrigeration facilities. Mr Roser has set up his own company, Quadrant, at Cambridge, to exploit his dis-

covery, and employs 30 people. After years of storage at room temperature, trehalose-dried antibodies worked well. Even notoriously unstable enzymes, such as DNA-modifying and restriction enzymes, worked after being stored for a month at 70°C, says Mr Roser. Another use is to store blood. "Fresh blood has a shelf life of 42 days, after which it must be disposed of. Trehalose-dried blood could mean an end to the critical blood shortages that are suffered by the health service."

Quadrant imports its trehalose from Japan. Production

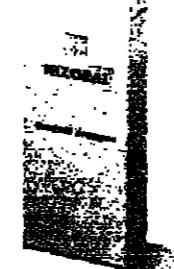


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First Aid for your dandruff.

Our solution, the Nizoral Dandruff Shampoo formula, proved so successful that it's been tried and trusted by doctors and dermatologists for years. Our shampoo cares for your hair differently. The breakthrough came when we identified and patented an ingredient that would specifically target and prevent the microbe that is the root cause of dandruff.

Nizoral Dandruff Shampoo is effective, and after an initial period of using it twice weekly, you should only need to use it once a week to keep dandruff away. In between, you can wash your hair with whatever shampoo you like. You can buy a bottle from your pharmacist without prescription. To obtain your free information leaflet, call 0990 134 218.



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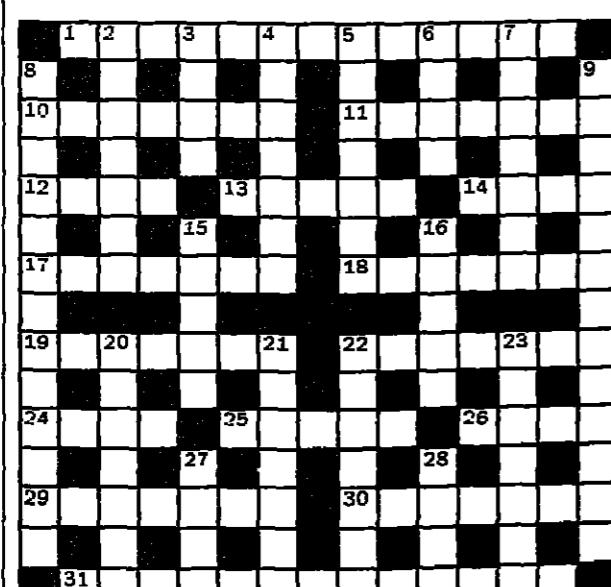
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